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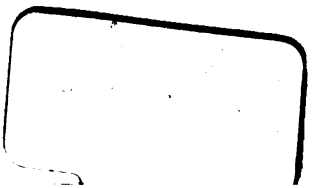

HENRI;

OR,

THE WEB AND WOOF OF LIFE.

BY

WILLIAM G. CAMBRIDGE.

"The web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues."— ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

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PREFACE.

READER, my little book is before you, and I would fain believe that I have not toiled in vain to make it, in some degree at least, interesting and worthy of your approval. I am painfully conscious of its imperfections, and yet I venture to hope that it has some excellences which will not be entirely overlooked, even though you find many defects and blemishes. What though there are broken and mended threads, and parts which are rough and unfinished; they do not, I trust, mar the whole fabric, although they affect its beauty and perfection. The mechanism of the brain is not always in good condition; and the rushing blood, which turns the great wheel of thought, and keeps the machinery in motion, sometimes gets low and sluggish in its course, so that the woof-threads of the mind are not shot through the warp with the quickness and uniformity which insures smoothness and perfection. Again, the stream rises and dashes on impetuously, and the machinery is uneven in its movements, quick or slow; and then threads are broken or but loosely drawn, and the work is not well done. It is well, at such times, to shut down the gates, and let the machinery rest; but the poor artisan may not always feel at

liberty to do so, even though his heart aches and his body is full of pain.

Some may inquire if the things here narrated are true, and the characters real. Such questions are frequently addressed to an author; but it is doubtful whether they should be, for his book may contain much truth beneath a "thin veil of fiction," and yet he may not choose to say so. Whether the personages in my book are fictitious or otherwise, they seem real to me. So long have I been on familiar terms with them, that it is difficult to persuade myself that they are only the shadowy creations of the mind.

In the construction of my work I may have used matter which was not my own; but I trust my sins in this respect are few and far between. Fine figures and beautiful thoughts, which others may rightly claim, may be used unconsciously. The trees of light and knowledge are full of golden leaves, and the winds waft them to us, and, with gratitude in our hearts, we gather them up with care, and drink in their beauty; and it would not be strange if we sometimes felt and used it as though it were our own. For all the materials I have used which belong to other authors, I offer, it being the very best I can do, my most unfeigned thanks. And, as the author of "Richard Edney" has said, "If those from whom I have borrowed dislike anything of theirs in this connection, they will withdraw it; should they chance to like anything of ours, they have full permission to use it."

I have written this book with the very best intentions, hoping that it might do good, and receive a welcome in many homes. The character of the mother of Henri may

be considered as overdrawn and unnatural, but I *know* that it is not an impossible character. Some may wish that the scenes of strife and contention had been left out. I highly respect the motives of such, and would have done so if I had deemed it consistent with my plan, and with the characters described. No one disapproves of such scenes more than the author of this book; and if anything here described should lead to quarrelling and discord, it would be a source of lasting regret.

I designed the work to be reformatory in its character; and so I have advanced ideas which are unpopular, and by some considered Utopian, and by others in advance of the age. But it mattered not with me what others might say or think; for I cared more for the good that might be wrought than for the approving smiles of those who ever walk with their backs to the sun, and their faces to the past.

So much by way of preface; and here I will stop, for it is not needful that I say more. Let the book be read, and dealt with according to its merits.

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CHAPTER I.

THE RESCUE.

AT half past three, P. M., the School Teacher informed me that I was at liberty to return home, as my mother had sent a request that I might be dismissed at that time. I knew that two of my cousins were expected at our house that afternoon, and surmised that was the reason why my presence was desired.

The weather was exceedingly beautiful, and all nature looked so inviting that I could not find it in my heart to hasten home, even though my cousins were waiting for me. From my early childhood, I have felt such an absorbing love for those beautiful creations which are so manifestly God's, that at times it has been beyond the power of man, or the cares and conflicts of the world, to draw me from their communion, or break the spell which held me so lovingly in their soul-purifying embrace.

I walked along, very leisurely, frequently stopping to examine the wings of a beautiful butterfly, or cull a sweet

flower growing by the wayside. And when I came to a dark, swiftly-running stream, I looked into a deep hole, and saw beautiful fish, with tints bright as gold. How they darted when they saw me, so quickly that those bright spots seemed to emit a stream of light!

My age was then fifteen, and it was not often that I enjoyed the luxury of walking home alone; and when I did, I improved the time well. I examined everything that pleased me, and went through a course of reasoning, in my own mind, in relation to them. I queried if the butterfly was not made to teach man of a higher and better life than this. The worm that crawls upon the earth, I thought, might represent man in his present state; the butterfly that floats on zephyrs with golden wings, his immortal and glorious state. The worm weaves its own winding-sheet, and, in due time, the cerements are thrown off or burst asunder, but the worm is not there. A bright and beautiful creature springs forth, sailing away as on the wings of light. Now, its sphere may be termed spiritual, for it is a renewed and higher state. It no longer grovels in the dust, but soars in the air like a bird, visiting, at its will, green fields and delightful gardens, and when weary, finding a fitting resting-place in the soft bosom of a flower.

Man's state, in some respects, is not dissimilar; too often vicious and degraded, he plods on his way, burdened with sin and disease, so that he despises himself when-

ever he looks within, and sees the dark spots upon his own soul. But the time comes when he goes through a change analogous to that of the worm. The body is cast off, and the inner life, the spirit, comes forth, clothed with glory and beauty, and, like the butterfly that shakes its bright wings close to the crawling worm, unperceived by it, so the spirits of the departed are ever near us, though we perceive them not. Floating on wings of ethereal brightness, they comfort with happy thoughts and bless with hopeful aspirations those they love.

While such reflections were passing through my mind, I thought of my father, who had been dead six years, and of my little brother, the youngest of the family, who had died two years after. I wondered if they were as much exalted above their former sphere as the butterfly, and whether they were not hovering near me, their wings flashing in golden light! When a soft breath of air fanned my hot cheeks, I half fancied that it was caused by the sweep of their beautiful wings. The fancy did not startle me in the least; but I wished they might be ever near, to watch over, bless and guard me.

I do not believe that the idea of spirits returning to earth, or hovering ever near the creatures of their love, is naturally frightful to children; but it is made so by fearful stories of ghosts and goblins, some with skeleton heads, and others with the red blood gushing from ghastly wounds. These horrid creatures ever come on dark, dreary nights,

on errands of revenge and mischief. They are represented as something to be dreaded, being the emissaries of hell! I know not why we should so much fear the departed. Are they not better and holier than earth's children? The Bible tells us that they manifested themselves in olden times, but ever for a good purpose. Should they visit us now, they would be messengers of truth and love, seeking the salvation and happiness of friends dear and cherished. Welcome, then, to spirit messengers, if the good God sees fit to send them to us!

I had accomplished but a part of my walk home, when I heard the cry of a child, which seemed like the voice of a young girl, in distress. It came from a field near by. I quickly mounted the wall, and saw a boy, some two years my senior, holding in his arms a little girl, who was struggling for release. He covered her mouth with one of his hands to stop her screams. I made all haste to learn the cause of these proceedings. When he saw me, he quickly let her go. I perceived that she was greatly frightened, for she trembled violently.

"What does this mean?" I inquired.

"None of your business, sir."

"Then I will make it my business," I answered, somewhat sharply.

"You will, hey? Start yourself sir! — make tracks, or I will break every —— bone in your body!"

"Don't be in such a hurry! I have but just come, and shall not leave till I please."

"Yes, you will, or get an almighty thrashing,— one of the six!"

"I care but little for your threats; so do not think to frighten me, sir."

"Well, don't meddle with my affairs, and there will be no trouble. Go about your business!"

"And leave this poor thing in your hands?"

"If you please, sir. An't she a beauty? I'm in love with her. Just see how clean and nice she is!"

I looked at her, and saw that she was dirty and ragged, — fearfully so. "Who is she?" I inquired.

"She is Deacon Webber's drudge. The old Pharisee has given her his robe of righteousness to clothe her with."

"But why do you abuse her,— why detain her against her will?"

"That is my business, and don't you interfere! If you do, I'll thrash you till you can't stand." The sweet blue eyes of the poor child were now fixed upon me, imploring my assistance.

"Don't you meddle with her again!" I said, giving him a look of defiance.

"I was always famous for obeying my superiors," he replied, contemptuously, at the same time taking hold of her hands, and pulling her along in the direction of the woods.

"Let her go," said I, "or, by heaven, I'll make you sorry!"

"What a brave little man! Talk away, but this beauty must go with me. Come along, Sukey; I will not hurt you." Singing, "Come, Sukey, you must go with me."

My blood boiled now, and, leaping upon him, I caught him by the hair of his head, and laid him upon his back. He sprung up in a moment, and, with a well-directed blow, knocked me down and jumped upon me, beating me in the face until I was covered with blood. I fought with all the strength I had; but he was too much for me. He might have killed me on the spot, if the girl had not picked up a stone and given him a blow upon the head, which made him roar with pain. Another blow from the same weapon, in concert with a well-directed blow from my fist, laid him senseless. Taking her hand in one of mine, and her basket of dandelions in the other, I led her from the spot.

On our way home, I learned that the name of the one I had rescued was Helen Means. It was true, as that young rascal had said, she lived with Deacon Webber. Good Heavens! how my heart swelled within me as I looked at her clothes, if such they might be called, more attentively. I had never seen a child clad so meanly. A mere batch of dirty rags hung upon her fragile form, and upon her head was an old straw bonnet, full of holes,

through which peeped her auburn hair, beautiful and glossy, even though no care was taken of it.

Had I lived in a city, I might have seen children clad even more meanly, if it were possible, than Helen Means; but then I had never visited the city. In our beautiful country town there were but few poor people. I have since seen enough to make my heart sick, and to convince me that there must be something radically wrong in society. What more sorrowful sight than to see little children, all ragged and filthy, with faces looking old and sad, searching the gutters for orange-peel and apples half decayed, eating them when found with a ravenous appetite? I can conceive of a state of society so true and divine that such things could not be; where children would be ever cared for, fed, clothed and educated, even if their parents should forsake them entirely. A state of society where there should be "Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity;" where the good, the welfare of one should be the welfare of all, and where one could not be left to suffer without causing all the rest to suffer with it.

In my holiest moments, I look through the dim vista before me, and behold harmonial unions springing up all over the world; from year to year the work goes on, until all men are gathered into the great fold of love and truth, dwelling together in peace, a divine order of society, where antagonisms, and wrongs, and slaveries, can never enter. The reader may smile at this, and per-

chance silence the author by merely whispering the word Utopia.

As I looked at this poor girl, I thought to myself, "Can it be possible she lives with a pious deacon, one who is a burning and shining light in the church? No one exhorts the people to repent more constantly than he; no one warns them more frequently — not even the minister — of the danger to which the sinner is exposed, — the awful danger of unrepented wrong." With these reflections, I thought religion must be a great farce or a tragedy, and perhaps both. How often had my mother spoken of the pious deacon, as worthy of all imitation! She spoke of the money he gave to send the gospel to the heathen; and how he prayed twice every day with his family; while he was a terrible enemy of all evil-doers. He was truly one of the great pillars in the church,— at least, in her estimation. I asked Helen a number of questions, which she answered in such a plain, artless manner, as to win my admiration, as repulsive as was her appearance, to a mind closely allied to the bright and beautiful.

"Let us go to the brook and wash the blood off your face," said she, as we left our fallen foe. "I fear you are very much hurt. I am sorry you got hurt so much on my account."

"I am not sorry in the least," I replied, "as I was instrumental in delivering you from the hands of that

vile boy. But, let us not stop at this brook, for he may recover and attack us again."

"I think we could master him, if he should. But there is another brook on beyond, and you can wash your face there."

"How long have you lived with Deacon Webber?" I inquired.

"Six months, next Saturday."

"Where did you live before?"

"At home, in the city of Boston."

"Do you like to live with Deacon Webber?"

"Should you think so, by my looks?" she said, with a sad voice.

"I should think you would hate him, and all the family. I would not stay there one day, if I were you, to be kept so ragged and filthy."

"I cannot help it. I have nowhere else to go! Boston is fifty miles from here, and my parents don't know but that I am used well!"

"Why don't you write and tell them?"

"I never learned to write much; besides, I have no pens, ink and paper. If I should write, my parents are so poor they could not come after me."

"Poor girl! But don't you despise the deacon, and all that belongs to him?"

"I do sometimes, for I cannot help it when he beats me so; and then I think it may be wrong to hate and

despise anybody. I fear I have hurt that boy very badly, but I could not help it. Had we not better return and see to him? I am afraid he will die!"

"He is an ugly fellow, and I have not the courage to go near him again; — he might kill us both. There he is, coming now; let us run. Hark! he is threatening vengeance."

Just then a large team came in sight, and we felt no longer afraid. When our enemy saw that aid was near, he hesitated a moment, then turned and fled towards the woods. At a little singing brooklet the blood was soon washed from my face and hands.

"You are hurt badly," she exclaimed,—"very badly. What a brute that boy is! I believe he had just as lief killed you as not."

"Never mind, Helen, I shall get over it; though my head is very painful, and I have a severe pain in my side, where he kicked me."

"You look very pale. I think you must be faint. Lie down upon the grass, and I will bathe your head with water."

I was very faint indeed, and so I laid down upon the soft grass, while she brought water in her hands and bathed my burning temples. I was delighted with the gentle and affectionate manner in which she performed the part of a nurse, and felt more indignant with the deacon, who treated her so shamefully. When I had

sufficiently recovered, we resumed our walk and conversation.

"Did you say that the deacon is in the habit of beating you?"

"Yes, he beats me every day, and his children knock me about when they please."

"What do they treat you so for?"

"They accuse me of lying, and say that I am a thief. If any sugar, pie or cake, is missing, it is laid to me; and if I deny it, I am accused of falsehood. I have never taken anything but once, and then I was so hungry that I could not help it. I took a quarter of a pie, and ate it; and I believe that I should have done so, if I had known they would have killed me."

"What miserable wretches they are! I shall never take any more comfort while you stay there. I will write and inform your parents."

"It will do no good, they are so poor. Father is intemperate, and does nothing for the family. Mother provides everything by taking in washing."

"How many brothers and sisters have you?"

"Five. All younger than I am, but one. Caroline is twelve, and two years older than I am."

"Your mother ought to know of this; it is a burning shame. Do they give you a good bed to sleep on?"

"They let me have a pretty good one, at first, but now

I sleep on some rags in the attic. I never take off my clothes when I lie down."

"Is it possible? Do you ever go to school?"

"I went some when I was in Boston, but now I do not go at all. Mr. Webber says that poor children do not need learning, and so he keeps all the books and papers out of my reach. One day I looked into a book, and he punished me for it. If I could get books, I would read, if he did beat me."

"Don't your parents wish you sent to school?"

"Yes, and the deacon promised that I should go four months every year."

"How long are you to stay there?"

"Until I am eighteen, if I live so long."

"You will not stay one year, if I can prevent it. Seven long years to be abused by a soulless pack of wretches! No, you shall be removed by some means. I wish my father was alive; the work would be done quick, and it *shall* be done now!"

"O! if you can help me get away from them, and find me a good place to live, I shall be so grateful, and I *know* God will bless you."

"I will see what can be done. Don't despair, and all will work right. You must not tell a single person of our intentions."

"And do you think that you can get me away?"

"I *will*, if I live."

We had now arrived at the place where we must separate. I stood and watched her until I saw her enter the house of Deacon Webber; I then walked slowly home. When I entered the door, my mother met me in the entry, and seeing that I was injured, she exclaimed,

"What have you been doing, Henri? Fighting, wicked boy! Have you so soon forgotten what Deacon Webber said to the children, last Sunday, about quarrelling?"

"Don't say anything about that old villain! I can't bear the sound of his name!"

She seemed astonished, and she said, "Why do you speak so of Deacon Webber? What can you mean?"

"I meant what I said, mother. He is the greatest rascal in the whole town, and cruel as the grave!"

"I am astounded, Henri, to hear you," she said. "Are you crazy? Deacon Webber is as holy as the ministers of the gospel!"

"Then the ministers ought to be hanged!" I replied, quietly.

"What vile and insolent talk! So young, and yet so wicked and heaven-daring; — how like his father!"

"Do not speak evil of my father; for I know that he was a good man, and he is now among the blest; and sometimes I fancy that his beautiful spirit, with white wings, is flitting near me." We had now entered the sitting-room, and my mother had taken her accustomed seat.

"For mercy's sake, Henri, do not speak in that way! Your father cherished a fatal error, and there is little hope for him, for he held on to it unto the last. You were too young then to understand the fearful nature of such things; but you are old enough now. Deacon Webber has often alluded to your father, and warned others, lest they too should turn their eyes from the light, and imbibe an error so false and pernicious. Have you never heard him?"

"No, mother, and it is well I have not; for I would have told him to his face that he was a base slanderer; for I know that my father is one of the brightest spirits that ever was crowned with life eternal."

"You shall not talk in that way, Henri, for I cannot hear it; 't is too awful."

"Don't be afraid of the truth, for it will not harm you, mother. And as to Deacon Webber, I despise him, the wretch! A pretty man he is to warn others,— he had better begin at home! Look at Helen Means, his little servant,— treated in the most shameful manner, clothed in rags and filth, half fed, sleeping in the attic alone on a pile of dirty rags; whipped and knocked about every day; never allowed to read, study or go to school!"

"Who told you this?"

"She told me, herself. As I was coming from school, I heard a cry of distress. I hastened to learn the cause. It proved to be Helen Means; and a great boy was

abusing her, and he seemed to think that he had a perfect right to, as she was clothed with what he called Deacon Webber's righteousness."

"What did he mean by talking in that way?"

"The miserable rags which he gives her to wear, instead of decent clothes. I suppose you understand that?"

"What depravity!"

"Never mind the depravity, but hear the rest of my story. The boy would not let the girl alone, and I fought with him. He would have killed me, I fear, if it had not been for her; for she hit his head with a stone, and knocked him senseless. We walked home together, and she told me how the deacon and the whole family abused her."

"A nice business to be engaged in, truly! — two boys and a girl fighting! Your cousins have been here to see you, and have gone home. Deacon Webber came to me to have a talk about that child; and after he had told me how wicked she was, I advised the present course of treatment, that she might be saved as by fire."

"You did, mother?" I said, springing out of my chair. "You advised such treatment as she receives? Whoever advises or justifies such treatment as that is an unfeeling monster!"

After I had uttered these words, I thought they were very severe, spoken to a parent, and hardly justifiable; but I was not sorry, for I felt that any being who would counsel such wicked abuse of a little child was a wretch,

and though the guilty one held the endearing relation of mother, it did not alter the fact. Shame upon those who neglect and trample upon poor and orphan children! If those who have the care of them abuse and neglect them, others will ask no better license.

My mother was very much startled and surprised at my language and manner. She gave me a violent push with her hand, which sent me to the floor, and striking my head, the blood streamed forth anew. I was weak from the loss of it, or I should not have fallen.

"I will teach you," she said, "to talk in that way to your mother! What do you think of yourself, you wicked boy?" She now stopped and regarded me with a strange, unearthly look, as I stood before her, the blood running down my face.

After a few minutes I replied, in great bitterness, "You call me wicked; and it would be strange if I were not, when my own mother counsels the most savage abuse of a little child."

"Keep your insolent tongue still, or I will chastise you severely!"

"I care not if you do, but I *will* speak! I will write to Helen Means' parents, and tell them how Deacon Webber abuses her; and I will tell everybody else that you advised it."

I had never talked in this manner before, and I could not then, if I had not been in the highest state of excite-

ment. For more than one reason, I had but little filial affection for mother; and when she spoke so complimentary of the deacon, and so unkindly of my father, and then confessed her participation in the wrongs of that poor child, my whole nature was aroused with indignation. I was faint when I entered the house, and it was only the intense excitement which kept me up. At the close of my last speech I fainted, and knew no more until I found myself lying in my own bed.

CHAPTER II.

SICKNESS.— OUR FAMILY.— DISAPPOINTMENT.

When I opened my eyes, my sister Jane sat near me.

"How do you feel now, Henri?" she said.

"My head is painful, and everything seems strange. How came I here?"

"You fainted, and Thomas and I brought you here."

"Did I? O, yes, I remember that I was faint, and I feel weak and faint now."

"You will soon be better, I hope; so keep very quiet."

It was soon night, and I tried in vain to compose myself to sleep. Strange feelings, and sensations of a frightful character, came crowding upon me, until my poor brain was half crazed. By and by, whole troops of the strangest and most ghastly looking creatures that ever mortal beheld stood all around my bed and hovered over me, and placed their sunken faces close to mine, and looked at me with their hollow eyes. At first I saw them when I became drowsy and shut my eyes; and when I resolved that I would keep my eyes open, they soon marshalled their forces as before, and then they came in such numbers that I wondered how so many could get

into the room, and why they should go through such strange and antic evolutions. Sometimes I would fall partly asleep, and a hideous being would come close to me, and I would awake with a start; and just as I opened my eyes, this hideous-looking object would take the form and face of the boy from whom I rescued Helen, and, with his eyes fixed upon mine, he would move swiftly backward, until he receded from my sight. Again, the object of terror resembled Deacon Webber, and at the same time it resembled my mother; and the pale face of Helen Means was looking tearfully into mine. At times I screamed out in the agony of fear and terror, and the creatures would vanish away, but only to return in greater numbers and more horrible shapes. At last I lost all consciousness, and when I regained it the pain in my head was mostly gone, the strange sensations had taken their departure, and with them the ghastly crowd. I perceived that it was night, for a light was burning in my room. I was alone, but in a moment Jane came in, and I thought she had watched with me, and that it must be near morning.

When I attempted to move, I found that I was almost entirely helpless.

"What time is it?" I inquired, in a feeble voice.

"Half-past ten," she answered.

"So early! Why, I thought it almost morning."

"Do you feel better now?"

"Yes, only I am so weak. What makes me so weak?"

"You have been very sick."

"I know it, but how could I get so helpless in a few hours?"

"Why, you poor child! you have been sick three weeks."

"Three weeks!"

"Yes; and very sick, too

"How strange!"

"You have not had your senses since the evening you were taken sick, and we were fearful you would never have them again. But you must not talk more now. Here is some medicine which the doctor left for you to take as soon as you regained your senses; and he said he thought you would, during the night. There, go to sleep now, and to-morrow you will be able to talk longer, I hope."

I soon fell into a refreshing slumber, and I was not again conscious until morning, though I was told that I took medicine, talked, and opened my eyes two or three times. During the day I grew better and stronger, and the events which transpired on the day I was taken ill came back to me, causing very sad feelings. What would poor Helen think — that I had forgotten the forsaken child? I did not mean that she should have staid there another week. But sickness had defeated my hastily formed plans.

During the weeks that I was confined to the house,

after I began to grow better, my mother visited me frequently; but we were both cold and distant, and I was always glad when she took her departure, for I kept thinking of Helen. I prayed for strength; for I wanted to take her out of the hands of Deacon Webber.

How ardently I longed to see her once more, and tell her that I had not forgotten my promise, and as soon as I was well I would have her removed to a good home, where she should always be very happy, and where I would come to see her sometimes, and ask her how she liked, and if she was contented, and whether she was not very glad that she had escaped from Deacon Webber so nicely, to live in such a pleasant, quiet home. All this, and much more, I thought over a thousand times, during those helpless days. A number of fine things I would say to her, to cheer her up and make her smile with bright hope; — very wise things, no doubt, but, alas! like the beautifully formed speeches of a lover, they were never spoken. In three weeks from the time I regained my senses, I was able to leave my room, and soon after I was gratified with an interview with Helen.

One delightful morning I walked in the direction of the forage-ground owned by Deacon Webber, as I had learned that Helen drove the cattle to pasture every morning. I hoped that I might be so fortunate as to meet her on the way, that we might form a plan for her

escape. I was not disappointed, for I soon saw her coming towards me.

When we met, I took her hand, and asked if she was well. What a look of sorrow and grief she gave me, in reply! There was no necessity for her to speak,— to say to me that the greatest indignities and wrongs were daily heaped upon her,— for I could read in her face a world of meaning. Her eyes were like a book of sorrows,— every page blotted with tears! I saw that she was thinner and paler, and, if possible, she had a more weary and forsaken look. The poor girl tried to speak; but could not, but commenced crying bitterly. The sight of her and her distress made me wish that I had Deacon Webber in my power. I just then thought that I should like to torture him until I wrung agony and bitter repentance from his hard and wicked heart.

"You look wretched and sickly," I remarked. "Have you been sick?"

Half choking with grief, she answered, "I am sick of such a weary, cruel life."

"Poor child! Then they continue their savage abuse?"

"O, yes, and worse than ever!"

"Is it possible? What can the wretches mean?"

"I know not; for I do as well as I can. I would work every day, and never complain, if they would only leave off whipping and starving me. The deacon learned by some means that I had told you how badly I was treated.

He was awful angry when he came home; and he dragged me into the cellar, and stripped off my clothes, and whipped me until I could not stand."

"'I will teach you,' said he, 'to go tattling and lying to bad boys! I understand your case, and know how to make the application; and I think, Miss, that I shall effect a cure. Say another word about me or your treatment, and I will whip you worse next time, you lying wench! Sneaking round after bad boys, are you?' And then he struck me with his hand on the side of my head so hard that I was almost stunned.

"When he had done whipping me, he washed off the blood, and then put on my clothes and carried me into the garret, and left me there until the next day, before I had anything to eat. O! how I suffered that night! I prayed to God that I might die,— that he would take me home to heaven, that I might be delivered from that awful, cruel man. As we were going up stairs, we met Mrs. Webber, and I noticed that she was weeping, but I don't know what for.

"Since my severe whipping, the deacon tells everybody who comes into the house what a vile creature I am. If he should see you, he would make you hate me."

"No! no! By heaven, he would not!" I said, trembling with excitement and indignation. "Pardon me, Helen, for I have been the indirect cause of this outrage.

I told mother, and she must have informed the deacon, for I have not mentioned it to any one else. Shame upon her!"

"What! *your* mother! But do not speak harshly of her, for the deacon has lied to her, no doubt, and made her think that I am very wicked. What makes you look so pale and feeble and poor? Have you been sick?"

"Yes; very sick, or you should have escaped before this. But cheer up, Helen, for deliverance *shall* come."

"Do you think so?"

"I *know* so; and it will come soon, too."

"I believe you; so I will try and be patient until I am free. When shall I see you again?"

"In a few days, at this very place. But we must not be seen together, or our plans will be defeated. We will part now; so good-by, Helen."

"Good-by," she said; and, with hope beaming on her pale face, she walked hurriedly away.

The reader may have queried, ere this, why there should be so much bitterness between my mother and me. The truth is, though I did not know why then, I had never been a favorite child with her; but I knew that I was dearly loved by my father. The words of a modern song, although they place the mother in a somewhat unnatural position, yet they are true of some mothers; but I am happy to say they are the exceptions. I know they were true of mine.

"I never was a favorite;
My mother never smiled
On me with half the tenderness
That blessed her fairer child."

"Can a mother forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget." More than once did I, in my younger days, read Byron's "Deformed Transformed," and fancy that my case was in some respects like his; and I wished for that wonderful poet's genius, that I might paint a picture more strange and startling than his.

It is true, perchance, that it was my own fault, in a measure, that I was not more beloved by my mother and brothers and sisters; for, with the exception of little Herbert, to whom I alluded in the first chapter, there was in my early days but little love for me. Herbert's love for father and me was most intense. I well knew that he loved his mother, and all his brothers and sisters; but it was with an affection less deep and absorbing; and after his death I was deeply afflicted, for I felt so lonely. My dearest treasures were in the grave,— my father and darling Herbert. The passionate, headstrong boy often bent over their graves, and gave vent to his agony in burning tears.

At the time my story commences, I had two brothers and three sisters,— Thomas, Jane, Lizzy, George and Charlotte. Thomas, Jane and Lizzy, were older than I; and George and Charlotte, younger. A woman by the

name of Stewart lived with us, and had done so for a number of years. She was a widow, and, though one of the excellent of the earth, at times very sad, when she would talk of her husband, and her darling lost Lelia, her only child, and, as she frequently said, her angel child, for she was in heaven, with her dear father.

My father was one of the best men who ever lived; so it seems to me, from what I recollect of him. O! how much he loved me! But, although so good, I was well aware, after I had come to years of discretion, that mother had but little affection for him. He left us in good circumstances; for he owned an extensive, well-cultivated farm, and had some ten thousand dollars at interest. We chose for our guardian a man by the name of Edgarton, — a jolly, good-hearted, fat old farmer, who lived near by. His early education had been somewhat neglected, but we selected him because we knew that he loved justice and peace. The buildings on the farm, at this time, were mostly new, and so arranged as to form a fine country-seat. The house was elegant for the country, and embowered with trees. The school which we attended was about a mile from our home, and in the summer time a most delightful walk. On every hand were highly cultivated farms, fine orchards and lovely groves, with here and there a babbling, singing brook. Far away were hills and valleys covered with trees, which looked glorious to

me, as they waved their proud heads, green with leaves and golden with sunlight!

My father had but one brother living, and his residence was in a neighboring town. I had seen him enough to know that he was a very excellent man; and, as I thought, very much like my father. After giving the subject due consideration, I resolved to write to him, and ask his aid; which, I felt, would be cheerfully given. In accordance with this resolution, I penned him the following note:

"DEAR UNCLE: I want your counsel and assistance. "A poor girl, eleven years old, is living with a most "unmerciful tyrant. She is starved, beaten, and clothed "with rags; kept from school, and shut out from every "privilege. My heart aches for her, she is such a good "child. I wish you would come and carry her home. "I will have her dressed in a suit of my cast-off clothes, "which are too small for me. Thus dressed, she will "pass for a boy. Appoint your time and place, and she "shall be ready. Yours, &c.,

"HENRI EATON."

In three days I received the following letter in reply:

"MY DEAR NEPHEW: I was somewhat surprised at "the contents of your note, but am highly pleased with

"the idea of rescuing the little girl. You must proceed "very cautiously, or it will prove a failure. I will meet "you in the woods to-morrow evening, this side of the "village, near the Cold Spring. If you can so manage as "to have her there, dressed like a boy, all will be well. "Proceed with due caution, and tell the little girl not to "breathe a word to any one.

"Thy affectionate uncle,

"THOMAS EATON."

I was overjoyed when I read this note. The next morning I saw Helen a few minutes, and told her our plans. I pointed out the spot where she would find the clothes, and directed her, after she had put them on, to conceal herself near by until I came for her. With a beating heart I saw her pass by, when nearly sunset, going in the direction of Deacon Webber's pasture. I watched her until she went to the gate where the cattle were let in and out, and after opening it she passed on toward the woods. I followed her soon after, and found her dressed as directed. She made a very pretty boy, looking better than I had ever seen her before. We passed through the woods, then across a large field, and came to the Cold Spring, where we were to meet my uncle. We waited until dark, but he did not come.

The reader will surmise what my feelings were when the truth forced itself upon me that, from some cause, my

uncle was prevented from fulfilling his promise. What should be done now? As to Helen's returning to Deacon Webber's, that was not to be thought of for a moment; for, as she had not driven up the cows in due season, she would be most cruelly whipped. She trembled like a leaf, and began to sob as though her heart would break. A few moments before so hopeful,— now how changed!

"What shall I do now?" she exclaimed. "I cannot return to the deacon's; he would kill me. I would rather die here."

"It is strange that uncle does not come," said I; "but do not despair; he may come yet — it is not late. Some accident may have detained him. We will wait a while longer."

We sat down in sadness, scarcely venturing to speak a word aloud, and anxiously waited his coming, but waited in vain. We then went, at my suggestion, and got her old clothes and carried them some distance into the woods, and threw them into a hole, which was made when a large tree was overturned by the wind, and covered them up with pieces of wood and stumps, and whatever we could conveniently lay hold of. We did this because I suggested that she might have to stay in town a number of days; and, if her clothes were found, the attention of the people would the more readily be turned to the strange boy, and perchance lead to detection. After we had taken this precaution, we returned to the Spring; but,

as we found no one there, we immediately formed our plans for the night. I knew that I must go home without delay, or I should be suspected at once. But Helen must not be left in the woods alone. After much persuasion, she consented to come to the house and knock, and request a night's lodging, which she would most likely obtain, for I would ask Mrs. Stewart to intercede for her, if it was necessary.

Avoiding the road and walking fast, we soon reached the orchard adjoining the buildings. Helen was to wait there until I learned that it would be safe for her to come to the house. We were afraid that Deacon Webber was there, or had been there, in search of the runaway. If I did not return soon, she would know that the way was clear.

Mrs. Stewart sat in the kitchen, sewing, when I went in; and merely remarked that she missed me at tea, but, if I had not been to supper, she would get me some.

Nearly an hour elapsed before I heard anything of the fugitive. I was thankful when a faint rapping was heard at the door. Mrs. Stewart arose and opened it.

"Will you let me stay here to-night? I am a poor, little boy, with no home to go to," said a soft, trembling voice.

Mrs. Stewart had a heart brim-full of kindness, and she said, "Come in, dear, and I will see. I guess

we can keep you, my little wanderer." Helen obeyed, looking very much frightened.

"Don't tremble, poor boy! Nobody shall hurt you, here," said Mrs. Stewart. "What is your name?"

"Edward Bailey," was the answer,— the name I had suggested.

"Well, Edward, have you got lost, and so want to stay here to-night?"

"No, ma'am; I have no home anywhere."

"That is strange. Are you telling the truth?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"But how does it happen that a little boy like you should be seeking a place to lodge, at this time? Have you run away?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What did you run away for?"

"Because I was not well used."

"I should judge so, by your appearance. You are pale and poor. How strange that people will abuse such little children! How old are you, my poor little fellow?"

"Eleven, last month."

"You do not look to be more than eight. You are very small of your age. In what part of the country did you live, and what was your master's name?"

"I don't want to tell."

"Well, no matter. You are afraid that I should

betray you; but I would not, for the world. My religion teaches me to 'hide the outcast,' and shelter the fugitive, whether white or black. Deacon Webber says that we cannot fulfil our moral and constitutional obligations, unless we deliver the fugitive to his master. A pretty Christian he is, to talk in that way! Simple humanity teaches a holier doctrine. Man is greater than all the constitutions in the world; and, when he is wronged, the true Christian will help him, if he can. Have you been to supper, Edward?"

"No, thank you; but I do not wish for any supper."

"You should not say that you do not want any supper; for you do, and you shall have a good warm one," approaching her, and taking off the cap. "You look hungry and faint, and I am sure you are. I think Henri has not had anything to eat to-night; and so you shall sup together."

Helen looked up, with a grateful smile. As soon as Mrs. Stewart caught her eyes, she gave a sudden start, which frightened us both very much for a moment. We were fearful that she had seen Helen, and now recognized her. But we soon learned that there was no cause for alarm.

"Just such eyes!" she said, fixing a searching look upon Helen.

"To whom do you refer?" I inquired.

"To one who died some years since. This boy re-

minds me of her very much. He has eyes of the same color and expression,— only they are sadder, and I think his hair must have been of the same color when no older," smoothing it with her hand. "How barbarously they have cut it, shearing it close to your head!" The deacon had cut it off, as a punishment for the information she had given me. The simple truth, to him, was wicked lying.

"If you were my boy," Mrs. Stewart continued, "I should let it grow long, and hang in beautiful ringlets all round your neck."

Supper was soon ready, and I relished it better than I had a meal of victuals since my sickness. I was so happy in seeing Helen partaking of good substantial food, of which there was an abundance before her, instead of the miserable slops which the deacon gave her, that it revived my appetite. Mrs. Stewart said that the boy might stay over night, although Mrs. Eaton was absent. I was thankful to hear that mother was away. "Where is she?" I inquired.

"Gone to your uncle's, in ——."

I was surprised. Here, then, was the secret explained. I felt greatly relieved.

"When did she go?" I asked.

"At three o'clock, taking your brothers and sisters with her. They are to stay until the painting is done."

"I feel rather slighted."

"You have reason to feel slighted, Henri. But it is all for the best. I have been informed that you talked very saucy to your mother, previous to your sickness, which she has never forgiven. She thinks you are a very wicked boy. I cannot think you intentionally bad, though you have a quick temper. Children should never be saucy to their parents."

"I had good cause for what I said and did; but let that pass. I am heartily glad that she saw fit to leave me at home; for I shall be happier here. At some future time I shall pay uncle a visit, and I prefer to go alone."

CHAPTER III.

THE DEACON FOILED.

On the day ensuing, I received another letter from my uncle, which ran as follows:

"My Dear Henri: I hope you were not much disap-
"pointed, last evening; for you must have known that it
"would be impracticable for me to come after the girl while
"your mother was here. I was nearly ready to start when
"her carriage drove up to the door. She does not speak
"so complimentary of you as I could wish. I know not
"what to think. She says that you are very saucy and
"disobedient, and too intimate for your own good with a
"bad child,—a girl living with Deacon Webber, whom the
"good man has great difficulty in managing at all. The
"deacon has informed her that the girl is a liar and thief,
"and, although only eleven years old, 'prone to evil as the
"sparks fly upward.' I hope, Henri, these things are not
"so; for I have always loved you, you seemed so much
"like your lamented father. I hope your mother is mis-
"taken, and, I would fain believe, honestly so. She may

"have too much faith in Deacon Webber, and you may "have said what a child should not say to a parent. "People capable of cherishing such strong resentment as "your mother, would be very likely to magnify faults, and "see things in a false light. Be careful, in future, Henri; "for you both have hot blood.

"Your mother will return one week from to-day, and "I shall go with her, and will take the girl home with me, "if you wish. But, if she is the depraved thing your "mother has described, I cannot keep her, unless we can "reform her; and I am in hopes that your good aunt will "be able to do so, for she is so kind that her influence "with the depraved is very great. Write immediately, "Henri, and then I can determine what to do.

"Thy affectionate uncle,

"THOMAS EATON."

By the time I had finished this letter, my heart was very full of bitterness. "Would to God," I exclaimed, "that I had a mother worthy of the name!" I felt that she was unworthy of love or respect.

It is fearful for a child to feel thus towards a parent; but I could not help it. I thought that she was wantonly trifling with the character of her own child, and fearfully wronging a little, helpless girl, who had already suffered most shameful abuse. When I read the letter to Helen, and gave loose rein to some of my bitter thoughts, she

chided me, in her childlike way, for cherishing such feelings towards my mother. "Well, you ought to hate her," I said, in reply.

"O, no, I can never hate *your* mother!"

"You never can! But you ought to hate and despise any being who causes you such suffering. Let any one treat me so, and I should hate like a demon!"

"I would rather forgive."

"What! forgive those who abuse you so?"

"Yes."

"That is strange and unnatural. If I was a man, I should think it unmanly."

"Jesus always forgave; — was he unmanly?"

"I suppose not; but I cannot pardon those who wantonly abuse me, and I don't see how anybody can. But I must go and reply to my dear, kind uncle." I went to my room and immediately wrote this letter:

"DEAR UNCLE: I was shocked when I read the con-
"tents of your note. I tell you plainly that what my
"mother has told you is almost entirely *false!* I will not
"say that I have not been saucy to mother; but then I
"could not help it, and I don't think you would have
"blamed me. The girl whom she describes I suppose to
"be Helen Means, the one I want you to take home. The
"poor thing has received such foul abuse that it makes my
"blood boil as I write; and yet she has the best, the kind-

"est, the most forgiving disposition in the world. Deacon "Webber is a detestable hypocrite, and a monster!

"I was sadly disappointed, last night, in not finding "you at the Cold Spring. I knew not what to think. "My mother went away without informing me that she "was to be absent for any length of time, or that she "was to visit you.

"The poor child was in the greatest distress when she "was obliged to give up all hope of seeing you that night. "She did not dare to return to Deacon Webber's, for she "knew that she would be most unmercifully beaten. She "is now at our house, and I have persuaded Mrs. Stewart, "who is a kind, good body, to let her stay until mother "returns. She wears a suit of my clothes, which I wore "some years since; and they fit her very well. The "thought never occurred to us, until this morning, that the "clothes might be known; but, as Mrs. Stewart, who is "near-sighted, is the only one who would be likely to "remember them, we feel less anxious. We must not let "mother see her; for she would know the clothes, at once. "Be sure and return with mother, and Helen Means will "be ready to accompany you home. We will meet you "at the Cold Spring, at sunset. Till then, adieu.

"Yours, affectionately,

"HENRI EATON."

The five succeeding days passed very pleasantly;

Helen and I were constant companions, and I never was happier. Mrs. Stewart manifested the greatest anxiety for Helen's welfare, and was as kind to her as though she had been her own child. On the sixth day, we were in a field near the road for the first time, having hitherto avoided the streets, and every place where she would be likely to be seen and recognized.

But we had followed a large red butterfly, without thinking where it was leading us. Just as we were about to get over the fence, Deacon Webber came along in his carriage. When he saw us, he stopped his horse. He had been suspicious of me, and he quickly surmised that the seeming boy was the runaway girl. He looked at us a few moments; and then, addressing me, he said,

"Whose little boy is that with you?"

"Do you wish to know his name, Deacon?" I inquired, rather maliciously.

"His name, or his father's name,— I am not particular which."

"Very well, Deacon, I am not disposed to tell you either. You might as well drive along," was my very imprudent answer.

"Not quite so fast, you young imp of Satan! I want to know who that boy is; and, what's more, I *will* know!"

"We are neither of us Satan's imps, so we do not belong to Deacon Webber; and you had better not give

yourself any further trouble as to who my young friend is; for you cannot know, Deacon."

"What is your name, little boy?" he said, coaxingly. She stood trembling with fear. "I thought so," he continued. "I must come and be introduced, for I feel unaccountably interested."

As he leaped from his wagon, I caught up a stone; but Helen fled like a frightened fawn. The deacon ran after her, and, as I saw that he was gaining upon her, I threw the stone at his horse, which started him off at full speed. The deacon heard the noise of the carriage, and, turning round, bawled, lustily, "Stop that horse! stop that horse!" As he had a heavy bass voice, I thought that a tenor accompaniment would add to the effect; so I joined in singing the same tune, but on a different key, with variations. He pursued Helen no further, but went after his horse with all the power of locomotion he possessed, muttering and grumbling that he would have her yet, and promising to bring down any amount of judgments on my offending head. I listened to his threatenings with the most intense satisfaction, and was wicked enough to hope that his carriage would get essentially used up, and that it might be some hours before he would overtake his runaway horse. Watching him until out of sight, I went in search of Helen.

I expected to find her in the woods, which were not far off. It was astonishing how she ran. Had there

been a wild beast in pursuit of her, she could not have fled with greater speed. Ah! she knew but too well that a worse than wild beast was on her track. I would rather have a child of mine given over to the tender mercies of a hungry wolf than to put her into such hands as Deacon Webber's; and I have always felt that to uphold a system which gives such wretches the entire control of thousands of helpless children was not only unchristian, but monstrous.

I was disappointed in my expectations of finding Helen. I searched the woods until dark, in vain. I shouted her name in every part of them, but only the echoes answered me. When conscious that it was useless to search longer, I turned my steps homeward. As I entered the house, I met Mrs. Stewart.

"What does it mean?" she inquired. "Deacon Webber has been here to see your mother; and he says that you have enticed away his little servant-girl, and dressed her like a boy! Is this true, Henri?"

"True as the gospel," I replied. "Edward Bailey was Helen Means, and nobody else, and Deacon Webber's slave!"

"The deacon's slave! Did he abuse her?"

"Yes, he did. You would have been indignant, if you had seen those soiled rags which she wore day and night. He gave her rags to wear, and rags to sleep on; and he whipped her without mercy!"

"I fear what you say is all too true. I never liked that man. I am afraid that he will get her into his clutches again. Where is she?"

"I know not. But, if he gets her, he shall not keep her. He may murder her, but she shall never stay there alive."

"He says that she is an *awful* wicked child."

"He lies, Mrs. Stewart! There is not a better child in the wide world. Was your lost one a sweet and gentle child? So is Helen Means. She forgives injuries like an angel!"

"I am glad to hear you say it. But where can she be, poor thing? O! an awful account have they to render, who abuse children. A thousand prayers a day won't save them. The deacon accused me of being in the plot; and when I denied it, he very coolly told me that he hoped I might be able to clear myself. How insulting, after I had denied that I knew anything about the matter!"

"He is so false himself, that he thinks everybody else the same. He will accuse me, I doubt not; and I shall be proud to plead guilty."

"You must be careful, Henri, for your mother and the deacon are great friends. You know what a fearful temper your mother has, when it is roused! Do not, I beseech you, stir up a whirlwind of passion; for God only knows where it would end!"

"And I do not care much. I have but little anxiety for myself, but for that poor child it is agony! O! Mrs. Stewart, how would you feel if she were your own child, but eleven years old, and in the woods alone on such a dark night as this? What must be her feelings now? Terribly will she suffer to-night; but she will feel safer in the woods alone than she would in the hands of those pious tigers. I wish I had the deacon and his family in my power; — I 'd give them what they deserve! I hate and despise them all!"

"Tut, tut, Henri! Do not talk so. It is not Christian to cherish a revengeful spirit. Let us hope that all will yet be well. It seems a terrible thing for a little girl to be in the woods alone at night; but God will protect her, Henri."

"Amen!" I responded. "A blissful thought has just come into my mind; and O! it is as welcome as the balmy breath of flowers."

"What is it, Henri?"

"It is believed by many that the spirits of the dead — those who are worthy — watch over and guard the living. Perhaps my own dear father will be her guardian angel to-night, and while she sleeps drop a tear of sympathy upon her pale cheeks."

"A happy thought, truly, Henri. I love to think of the spirits of the departed hovering around us. The

blessed God sends them, to cheer and comfort the children of his love."

"May he send them to watch over poor Helen, to-night."

"Amen! Amen!"

It was late when I retired to rest. A number of times I went out, to see if I could find Helen. Frequently I fancied that I heard her footsteps, but it was ever an illusion. At twelve o'clock I sought my bed, and ere many moments I fell asleep, being greatly fatigued. I had not yet recovered my health, and could endure but little. The reader will not be surprised when I inform him that I dreamed of Helen.

I fancied myself in the woods, where I had never been before. The rain was pouring down in torrents, and I was soon drenched to my skin.

I wandered on in search of some object, but it puzzled me exceedingly to make out what it was. At last I stopped, for I could go no further. Suddenly a being approached me, so beautiful that I was entranced. Its wings were whiter than snow, and softer than the petals of a rose; and its eyes were gentle, and beaming with love. It beckoned me to follow. I obeyed, and was led to the base of a large tree, where I beheld a pale-faced child, sleeping as quietly as an infant on its mother's bosom.

"Dost know her?" said the spirit.

"It is Helen Means!" I replied.

"Listen," said the spirit.

She changed her position slightly, murmured Henri, and smiled. The rain was beating upon her, and she was very wet, all but her face. Her head being sheltered by a large limb of the tree, not a drop had fallen upon it. I could have wept to see her thus; but the spirit said, "Fear not; I will guard her."

At that moment I awoke, and I was somewhat startled; for it seemed that the words were spoken in my room. Had some one been there, and uttered them, that very instant, I should not have heard their enunciation any more distinctly. I listened; — the rain was falling, as though the flood-gates of heaven were opened. "Poor Helen!" I said; "you have need of guardian spirits at such a trying time as this."

It was some time before I again fell asleep, and then only to find myself in the same woods, and to pass through the same scene. Helen looked so natural, as she lay there, with the rain beating upon her, that it seemed more like a reality than a dream. The third time was the vision repeated, and when I awoke it was morning. The rain was still pouring down, and the wind was sobbing and moaning around the buildings, and shrieking in the trees near by, and then went sweeping far away, howling dismally when it reached the woods. I shuddered when I thought that mother would not be able to return, and, if I should find Helen, she could not make

her escape that day, and secure a sweet resting-place at my uncle's, which she so much needed.

But I was happily disappointed. At eleven o'clock the clouds broke away, and the sun came out warm and golden. How thankful I was! I spent the day in searching for Helen; but all in vain. With a sad heart, I met my uncle at the appointed time and place, alone. When he heard my story, I saw the large tears roll down his face. I could not weep, for my eyes were dry and burning.

"Let us hope for the best, Henri," said my uncle. "If you find her, do not fail to let me know it, and I will come for her without delay. I now regret that I had not met you at this spot at the time first appointed."

With heavy hearts we separated. I went home, and, without seeing my mother, brothers or sisters, went to bed, but not to rest. A few snatches of sleep were all that I could get through a long night. The thought of the lost one haunted me, and I courted the sleepy god in vain.

CHAPTER IV.

MY MOTHER AND DEACON WEBBER.

LIKE the preceding day, I wandered in search of Helen. I passed through one piece of woods after another, until I came to a lot of wood-land, some three miles from home. Here the scenery seemed natural, as if I had lately been there; and yet I had no recollection of ever being there before. I was positive that this was the first time. Presently I came in sight of a noble-looking tree, unusually large; and then I remembered my dream. The tree was the same, and at its base — incredible as it may seem — the form of a child was impressed upon the earth, as though it had lain there for hours. The spot where her head had rested was precisely the same; a large limb of the tree was directly over it. I was now satisfied that Helen had slept there on the night she had fled from her enemy. She might, I thought, be still in the woods. I rambled through every part of them, and often shouted her name; but, like the preceding day, echoes were my only reply. When nearly sunset, faint and weary, I returned home.

On the morning following, I received a message from my mother, commanding my immediate presence in the

sitting-room. I knew what I might expect, but I did not care in the least. Despair had nerved me for anything. I entered the room without flinching, and saw, sitting upon the sofa, my mother and Deacon Webber. Their faces darkened, when their eyes fell upon me, like a thunder-cloud; but this did not alarm me in the least. I just then liked it, and was willing that the lightning and thunder should follow. "Take a seat," said my mother, without altering a muscle of her face. I mechanically obeyed, and sat myself down in front of my accusers. They looked at me sternly, but without producing the effect they intended. Mother trembled, and I knew the storm was coming.

"How have you spent your time, during my absence, Henri?" she inquired.

"In doing good, I hope, mother," I replied.

"Wicked boy! Do not tell me so; for I know better."

"If you knew all about it, why did you ask me?"

"To see if you would speak the truth."

"A worthy motive, truly!"

"The crimes which you have been guilty of, during my brief absence, are startling, and almost unaccountable, in one so young!"

"That 's news to me! Who are my accusers?"

She pointed to the deacon.

"Very well," I said, regarding him contemptuously; "go on!"

"He has informed me that you have enticed away his little servant-girl, Helen Means!"

"Is that the biggest crime in the dark catalogue, I wonder?"

"What have you to say to this charge?"

"I will tell you, in a few words. It is false! — nothing can be more so."

"Be careful how you speak, Henri! Don't be too hasty. Do you charge Deacon Webber with falsehood?"

"It 's a matter of very little consequence to me."

The deacon arose, in a passion.

"Boy!" he said, "such insults cannot be allowed. Beware, sir, what you say, or you may be guilty of still greater crimes! I am an anointed vessel in the holy church, — a member of Christ's glorious body."

"I was not aware of that fact. Do you really believe that you are a member of Christ's glorious body, an anointed vessel in his church?"

"Blessed be his holy name, I do! I know, for I have the evidence within me."

"I hope we shall see the fruits, then."

"You would, if you were not so blinded by sin and wicked works. Since I became a member of that mystical body, I trust that I have let my light shine upon a darkened world. When you speak against me, you speak against one of the elect, and you do it at your peril."

My mother gave a deep sigh.

"Those filthy rags," said I, "worn by Helen Means, are an evidence of your *holiness* and purity, I suppose."

"I see that you are terribly depraved," replied the deacon; "and only the most severe chastisements will save you. Helen Means is a vicious child, like yourself. I knew that a solemn responsibility was resting upon me, and I resolved to be faithful. I did not mean that her blood should cling to the skirts of my garments. I had commenced a course of discipline which would, I doubt not, if you had not thwarted my plans, have proved effectual. I gave her poor clothes, because I wished to teach her humility. I let her go filthy and ragged, that she might learn how full of all uncleanness was her own heart, and how it was torn by the unresisted temptations of the devil. I chastised her severely, that she might think of the fearful chastisements which God would inflict upon her, if she did not repent of her sins,— her wicked lying and stealing, and other sinful deeds. I often told her of all this; and, previous to her acquaintance with you, the remedies were working admirably for the cleansing and purification of the sin-sick soul. And now, if she sinks into utter ruin, the hideous curse, burning and blasting the soul, will fall upon you!"

This sublime bombast, and hypocritical nonsense and wickedness, caused my mother to draw a long breath, while she seemed to shake as though cold chills were

creeping over her. I was tempted to ask her if she did not think she was going into an ague-fit. But, knowing that she was my mother, I restrained my wicked propensity for somewhat wicked jokes.

"You can now see, Henri," she said, "how fearfully wicked you have been. Repent, before it is too late! Restore that sinful child to the arms of her faithful guardian, and go and sin no more!"

"You ask of me an impossibility," said I, with a calmness that surprised me. "If it were in my power, I would not do it. Bad as you represent me, I am not capable of a deed so monstrous. Should I be left to do so wicked a thing, I should never have the courage to ask God for mercy and pardon. Deacon Webber says that Helen Means is vicious, like myself. She is *not* vicious or depraved, whatever I may be; though she would have been made so, if she had not been so pure and truthful. Helen is an angel,— all love, truth and goodness. It is a shame to abuse any one as she has been abused. Such is not the religion of the New Testament. I wish that some in your church, who are what they profess to be, followers of Jesus, could know what I know! They are too pure to ever receive the bread and wine from such unholy and polluted hands. You seek to frighten me by denunciations, by appealing to my fears; but your labor is vain and useless. If I have

done anything to benefit that poor child, I rejoice at it, and I know that God will bless me."

"Shocking blasphemy!" exclaimed the deacon.

"I am astonished!" said my mother.

"Who ever heard of a boy, fifteen years old, talking in that manner before? The devil must help him," said the deacon.

"You are mistaken," I replied. "The devil never gets divided against himself."

"Hold your tongue, Henri! I will not have you talking so saucy. I am your mother, and I have a right to command you, and it is your duty to obey."

"If you wish me to hold my tongue, you should not ask me questions, and Deacon Webber should leave off making false charges."

Here my mother gave me a severe blow on the side of my head.

"Well done!" said the deacon. "He deserves harder knocks than that, to make him know his place."

"Blows upon my head, and excitement, caused very severe sickness, not long since; and the same agencies may produce the same effect again, and death may be the result, and that would be murder."

"Then obey me!" said my mother. "Do not speak again without my permission."

"You *are* my mother, I well know; but when you are leagued with a villain, for the vilest of purposes, and

through his influence abuse your own child, I feel it no sin to disobey."

"Have I not told you to hold your tongue?"

"You have, mother; but, though you kill me, in such a cause as this I *will* speak. You may attempt to cover up the most cruel wrongs with the stolen garb of piety; — it will not do. I see through it all, and know what your motives are." When I had said this, I started to leave the room.

"Stay," said my mother, "and hear the other charges against you. You are accused, in conjunction with Mrs. Stewart, of enticing away Helen Means, in clothing her like a boy, giving her shelter; and, when her master was about to regain her, you frightened his horse, causing it to run away, demolishing his carriage, and maiming the beast for life. Is not this all true?"

"I have already told you that I did not entice Helen away. She needed no enticement. The most wicked abuse drove her away, and that we all know. Mrs. Stewart had no part nor lot in the matter, and did not know of it until informed by her accuser. I shall not deny but that I gave Helen clothes, and boy's clothes too; for I wished her to escape, if possible. As to the last charge, it being of a serious nature, I shall let the deacon prove it, if he can. I am sorry for the poor beast, but I do not pity the owner."

"You have said enough," remarked my mother, "and

you ought to expect a punishment in accordance with your transgressions."

"I should like that, above all things," I replied.

"There is but one way for you to escape," she said. "If you will give the information requisite to enable the deacon to recover the child, you shall be pardoned."

"Is that all I am required to do? I could not possibly comply; for either of you know where she is as well as I do. She may be dead, and she may not be; but, whether living or dead, I know not where she is. And, if I did, I would have my tongue cut out of my head before I would tell you!"

"It is well for you," she said, "that you do not know; for if you did, and refused to tell us, we would tie you up and whip you until you revealed the truth."

"And you should beat me to death, and be no wiser; for I would die before I would tell you."

"You may go now," said my mother. "Your offences are of such an extraordinary nature that we require time to select suitable punishments."

I bowed very low, and left the room, well satisfied with the part I had acted, only regretting that I had confessed to furnishing Helen with boys' clothes, fearful that it might be the means of her recapture.

CHAPTER V.

SEVERE SICKNESS.— GOOD NEWS.

THE reader will say that such scenes between mother and child are deplorable. I will not deny it. But, constituted as I was, with a deadly hatred of every species of injustice, and with an impetuous disposition, how could I do otherwise than act the part I did? I do not now justify all I said to my mother; but the circumstances were peculiar, and I do not know that I should have said less, if my life had paid the penalty of my rashness. I was surprised that I governed myself so well.

As I went into the front entry, where I had left my cap, I saw Mrs. Stewart, who looked pale and anxious. We retired to the kitchen, where I gave her a brief history of the last hour's transactions.

"What will be the end of this?" she exclaimed, laying her hand upon my forehead. "Your head is as hot as fire. You must go and lay down, and I will bathe it with camphor."

"My head does feel strangely; but I cannot lie down now. I must have one more search for the lost child."

The most of the day I spent in the fields and woods, but with the success of other days. When night came, I returned home, with my head burning and painful. A number of times I was obliged to stop, and think which way I must go. Sometimes I could not see, for there was a blur before my eyes. I reached home, at last, and hastened to bed, but not to rest; for I passed through scenes more distressing than those of my previous sickness. How long was that night! It seemed to me, in my lucid moments, that morning would never come again. Sometimes I thought I must be with the damned, where night has no morning, pain no cessation, and the fire that was consuming me would never go out. O! how agonizing were my shrieks, which awoke me from my dream of horror! Then again I was wandering far, far away, in swamps and dark woods, in search of a lost child, whom I was doomed to seek after until found. Now I sunk into the mire, and struggled fearfully to get out; then I tore my clothes and flesh with thorns and briers, or in the deep, dark woods at night, where the wild beasts were prowling, and the dismal howl of hungry wolves made me tremble with fear and horror; and in a large tree over my head a tiger was about to spring upon me, and he showed his teeth and licked his chops, and glared at me with his great eyes, which looked like balls of fire. Just as he was ready to leap upon his prey, I sprang from the bed, in the wildest frenzy of alarm. Mrs. Stewart and

Jane caught hold of me; but I kept my eyes upon the tiger, and was surprised and delighted to see the tree upon which he sat wave to and fro with increasing violence, until he was thrown some distance into a lake, and sunk beneath the waves forever! Then I clapped my hands, and shouted in triumph. Sometimes I would see my mother, with distorted features and evil-looking eyes, aiming a blow at my head; while a creature who seemed like the devil, with the face of Deacon Webber, stood grinning and chuckling behind her. I caught a glass tumbler from the lightstand and aimed it at his head, and was awoke from my delirium by its going plump through the window.

Days and weeks passed away before I recovered from this most dangerous sickness. My head was shaved and blistered; and many times I heard it said, in a low whisper, "He cannot long survive." Mrs. Stewart and Jane attended me with the most loving faithfulness. Sometimes mother came and looked at me with great anxiety, and once I saw tears coursing down her cheeks. After many weary days, I was considered out of danger, and began slowly to regain health and strength.

As soon as I was able to think at all, my thoughts turned to Helen. I was rejoiced to learn that the search of Deacon Webber had been as fruitless as my own. No one had heard from her. For many days I felt that there was something which I wished to call to mind; but

what it was I could not make out. At last I thought I had been to the post-office, previous to my sickness, and requested that all letters directed to me should be kept at the office until I called for them.

I had now been sick four weeks, and I felt that there must be letters for me at the office. I despatched Mrs. Stewart with an order that they should be delivered to her. She speedily returned with three letters, and by their superscriptions I knew that they were all from Uncle Eaton. I requested Mrs. Stewart to break the seals, and read them to me. The reader will be glad to peruse them entire.

"DEAR HENRI: I have good and bad news for you. "Helen Means is here, but she is very sick. Come and "see her, if you can, immediately; if not, write on the "receipt of this. In haste, yours,

"THOMAS EATON."

O! how anxious I was for the contents of the next letter. But I did not get them until I had doubly and trebly promised to be calm. The second was no more satisfactory. It was dated two weeks later.

"Why have you not written, Henri? Have you lost "your interest in Helen, now that she has found a home? "She is dangerously sick with a fever, but we hope for

"the best. In her delirium she often calls for you,— "for you to save her,— so piteously that I cannot refrain "from shedding tears, when I hear her. If you have "any regard for us or for her, hasten hither. Do not "delay one moment. Thy uncle,

"THOMAS EATON."

I now trembled with excessive agitation, but happily I was soon relieved of my fears. The third note was dated only five days later. I never listened to the reading of a letter with more intense satisfaction. It was like good news from a far country, or like water to the thirsty soul. I had been fearful that her great sufferings would be too much for her, and that she would sink in death under their accumulated weight, and I should never see her again.

"DEAR HENRI: Twice have I written to you, and "have received no answer. We are anxious on your "account. We are fearful that you are sick, or some "mishap has befallen you. Possibly the letters have got "miscarried, or some one has taken them out of the office "without your knowledge. I shall wait a few days for "an answer to this letter, and if I do not receive one, I "shall come to find out the cause of your silence. Helen "is convalescent. She is rapidly recovering. What a "sweet child she is! I never saw a little sufferer so

"patient. Your aunt is delighted with her; and, as we "have no children, she seems already like our own, and "no inducement could be held out strong enough to make "us willing to part with her. We love her better every "day. I hope that you will soon be with us, for Helen "wishes very much to see you. She sends her love to "her friend Henri. Your aunt wishes to be remembered. "If you are able, I want you to write without delay.

"From your uncle,

"THOMAS EATON."

"Good! good!" I cried, clapping my hands. "Now I shall get well. Bring the writing materials, and an answer shall be on its way soon."

Mrs. Stewart objected, but I was determined to write then; and at last she brought pen, ink and paper, I promising not to write but a few lines. I penned my uncle a brief note, informing him of my severe sickness, and that I had just received his letters. I requested him to write and inform me where he found Helen, and where she went to after she fled from Deacon Webber.

In relation to the last item I was somewhat particular; for my dreams, with subsequent events, had made a deep impression upon my mind. I was more than half convinced that my spirit, while the body was at rest, left its earthly home, and went in search of the lost child; and was guided to her by the guardian spirit of my father, and

that he would henceforth take us both under his angel-care, and that was the reason why Helen went to the place where my uncle found her, which ended her wanderings, and blessed her with a dear, sweet home, where kind ones would watch over her in sickness, and take care of her in health.

A few days brought a reply, which I was able to read myself. It was all interesting to me, and I hope it may prove equally so to my readers.

"DEAR HENRI: Your brief note made us all very sad, "for we were fearful that you had been subjected to a "course of treatment which had again brought on the "brain fever. Helen, the dear child, was very unhappy; "for she said that you had endured all these sufferings for "her sake. She thought you must wish you had never "seen her. I told her that you would have no regrets, "as you had been instrumental in delivering her from "the hand of the tormentors; that you would glory in "the suffering which had wrought so great a good.

"How could that fiend — for I have no softer name to "apply to Deacon Webber — so wickedly abuse such a "sweet and gentle child? I have listened to her simple "story with astonishment and indignation. You know "that I am a peace-man, Henri; and yet I feel that if "the villain were here, I should with difficulty restrain "myself from giving him what he so richly deserves.

"But that would be wrong in me, I well know. He "will get his punishment yet. I repeat what I said in "my last letter,—never was there a better child. How "she could have sprung from the source she did, and "have so much refinement, and true womanly sense, I "cannot understand. She informs me that her father is "a drunkard; and I should think, from what she has "told me, that her mother has but little education and "refinement. Now for the information you desire.

"You remember that we parted at the Cold Spring "with sad hearts. I never was more unhappy than when "I turned my horse towards home. I felt deeply afflicted 'for the little wanderer, and accused myself of neglect "of duty, for not coming after her the week before, and "placing her in some secure asylum, until your mother "had returned.

"Some four miles from where I left you, as my horse "was walking slowly up a steep hill, when nearly at the "top I heard a slight noise in some bushes, at the side of "the road. Presently a small boy, or what I took to be "one, came out, and ran with great speed down the hill. "'Who goes there?' I asked, which quickened his "pace. Just at this moment, it occurred to me that it "might be the lost one, Helen Means. I called her by "name, saying that I was Henri's uncle. She stopped, "and seemed to hesitate. 'Don't be afraid,' I said; "'Henri has been looking for you all day; come and go

"home with me, poor child!' She now came quickly "towards me.

"'Are you Helen Means?' I inquired.

"'Yes sir,' she answered, 'and if you are Henri's "uncle, I shall be glad to go home with you; for I have "nowhere to stay to-night.'

"'Poor thing! I will give you a home, and a good "home, too,' I replied; and I placed her in my carriage, "and drove rapidly homeward.

"'Where did you stay last night?' I inquired.

"'In the woods.'

"'Were you not afraid?'

"'I was afraid, at first; but I thought that God would "watch over me, and so I laid down under a tree and "went to sleep.'

"'Did you rest well?'

"'Yes sir; pretty well, for I was very tired, having "run a long ways to escape from Deacon Webber.'

"'It was rainy, last night;—I suppose you got very "wet?'

"'I was wet to my skin when I awoke; soaked through "and through, it seemed to me. My clothes were real "heavy. My head was not wet much, though,—just a "little.'

"'I should have thought you would have been cold.'

"'I felt pretty chilly, and so once in a while I would "run as fast as I could, and then I would get under a

"great tree when the rain came down so fast this fore-
"noon. After the sun came out, I took off my clothes
"and wrung them out, and then put them on; and they
"are nice and dry now.'

"'I hope you had pleasant dreams, last night.'

"'They were very pleasant. I thought I was lying
"asleep in the woods at night, and that I was afraid to
"sleep there. I wished that Henri Eaton would come
"and stay with me; and I opened my eyes, and there he
"was, close to me. Then I was not afraid any more.
"When he saw that I was getting so wet, he looked very
"sorrowful. I spoke to him, and he left me in a moment.
"He came twice more during the night, and so I thought
"he might be near me all the time, and that I could
"talk to him in the morning; and so I slept nicely.'

"'Under such peculiar circumstances, it was a very
"happy dream. Have you had anything to eat?'

"'I found a few berries, but they were not good for
"much.'

"'You must be very hungry and faint?'

"'Yes, sir; but I have been without food a great deal
"longer than this.'

"'Where,— at Deacon Webber's?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'Too bad! but he will get his pay yet. What made
"you run so, when I spoke to you?'

"'I did not know but you were Deacon Webber, or "would carry me back to him.'

"'Should you rather stay in the woods than live with "him?'

"'O, yes; for he would half kill me, if he should get "me again.'

"Thus we conversed until we arrived at home. Helen "could take but little refreshment, and soon retired. In "the morning she was in a high fever, and delirious. For "a number of days she was in a very critical condition. "She lived over and over again the past, especially the "last few days. She would cry out, 'He is coming! "Let me go! Henri, save me!' Then she would cling "to the bed-clothes with frantic energy. Thankful were "we when the fever abated and reason returned. She is "almost well now, and is attending school. Never did "you see a happier creature. You have done well, "Henri; and the thought of it will be an unfailing "source of satisfaction, as long as you live.

"We shall expect you to visit us soon. Helen will be "overjoyed to see you, and so shall we all. Good-by, my "dear nephew. THOMAS EATON."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed, as I finished this interesting letter. "Helen is now safe. The deacon's wrath may now be visited upon me, but I care not." I knew

that I had not suffered in vain, and I was content. There was nothing to regret, for my object was accomplished.

I found, in the contents of this epistle, abundant food for thought and reflection. How singular that Helen's dream should be so similar to mine! Three times she fancied that she saw me; but did not see the guardian angel who led me to her, who had such beautiful white wings, and such sweet, loving eyes. I wished that she could have seen him too. But, after all, there was only a slight difference. How were the coincidences in our dreams to be accounted for? Would the peculiar circumstances by which we were surrounded solve the enigma? Perhaps so; but it did not seem to me that such strange coincidences could be accounted for on the supposition that dreams are always the disturbed fancies of the brain, caused by the action upon it of various external circumstances, which have been or are taking place. It seems more reasonable to suppose that man has interior senses, which may be awakened, or called into action, when the exterior are sealed, or in a state analogous to death. It may be that the soul, or the inner life,— the immortal spirit,— has the power, when the exterior senses are closed, of leaving the body for a time, for the purpose of doing good to a suffering friend,— to relieve distress, and comfort the sorrowing with happy thoughts.

I fancied that my spirit had wandered in search of

Helen, and was enabled to find her through the aid of a guardian spirit; and so her fears were removed, and she slept sweetly, though the earth was her only bed, and the storm was beating in fury upon her. Whether this idea will bear the test of enlightened criticism or not, it does not alter the facts. I learned, by some means or other, that Helen was in the woods where I had never been; and I was not only made aware of that fact, but of the other things connected with it.

Notwithstanding all this good news, and the best of nursing, I was a long time in acquiring sufficient strength to leave my room.

One afternoon, when my sister Jane came in to see me, I spoke to her of my brothers and sisters with some severity, because they did not more frequently visit me.

"I am sorry they feel as they do," she said; "but you know that they and you never agreed very well, and now they believe you very saucy and abusive to mother; and they are so indignant about it, that they do not come in often to see you, for fear of getting into a dispute with you while you are so unwell."

"I am very thankful for so much kind forethought. I hope they will not lose their reward."

"You should not doubt their motives, for they are good. You are all hot-tempered, and a dispute now would injure you very much."

"I wish they could see an inch beyond their noses! But where is mother, this afternoon?"

"She has gone to Mrs. Webber's funeral."

"Mrs. Webber's funeral! What Webber?"

"Deacon Webber's wife. Do you not know that she is dead?"

"No; I had not heard of her sickness. When did she die?"

"Yesterday morning. She has left a young child. It is sad to have a little child left without a mother."

"If she were my mother, I should not weep much. What a pity the deacon don't die too!"

"Why, Henri! you should not talk so; it is very wrong."

"He is a villain, Jane; and, if he was dead, the world would have reason to rejoice!"

"He is your enemy, Henri, but you should not be so bitter against him. Let him live as long as God is willing. We should love our enemies, and forgive them."

"You might as well ask me to love old clump-foot himself as Deacon Webber. If Milton has pictured out the devil correctly, I have more of a fancy for him than for the deacon. There is something sublime about the old fellow. When cast out of heaven and utterly defeated, he stood up proudly in the midst of his sufferings, and declared that he would rather

'Rule in hell than serve in heaven!'

Now, I like that; but these mean, savage, hypocritical creatures, like Deacon Webber, I do despise and detest!"

"You are a strange boy, Henri. If it were impossible for us to forgive and love our enemies, we should not be so commanded. If we rightly govern our spirits, we shall learn to love even our most bitter foes."

"I don't believe it, Jane."

"Why not?"

"For a very good reason. It is said that the devil, who is man's worst foe, will take delight in tormenting all he gets into his clutches. Will it be their duty to love him? If so, I will try to love the deacon; but I think it a very hopeless case."

"You may feel differently, some day; but let that pass. I fear you do not love me, Henri."

"Not so intensely as I might, perhaps. But, do you cherish much regard for your brother Henri?"

"Certainly, I do. But why do you ask?"

"I have never witnessed any particular manifestations of it."

"I grant that there has been more of coldness between us, in days past, than there should be between brother and sister; but I would have it so no more. In many respects you are different from the rest of us. Sometimes you are too bitter; but you have a kind heart. You are liable to be misunderstood. The better I understand you, the more am I drawn towards you.

Henri, I would have you confide in your sister Jane, and you shall always receive a return of confidence and love."

The kind-hearted girl almost wept as she spoke, and I wound my arms around her neck and imprinted a kiss upon her lips. She pressed me to her heart, and wept. This was happiness to me; for now there was one in our family who truly loved me. Mrs. Stewart came in, and was greatly delighted, calling us her dear children.

CHAPTER VI.

VISIT TO MY UNCLE'S.

When I was considered strong enough for the journey, I resolved, if not absolutely forbidden, to visit Uncle Eaton's; for I had a strong desire to see Helen Means. I often queried with myself as to how she would look and appear. I knew that I should not see her in rags or boys' clothes, but dressed with taste and neatness,— for my aunt was a paragon in such things. I thought it best to ask mother if I could have the privilege of making Uncle Thomas a visit; but I felt wicked enough to go, if she should refuse. I suppose my course would hardly be considered justifiable, but the part I was acting did not trouble me at all. A feeling of intense bitterness had sprung up in my young heart, and I spoke the endearing name of mother with great reluctance.

Was I to blame for this? I acknowledge the sacredness of the tie that binds parents and children. But it is possible to weaken the cord, or break it. Let the parent be false to the claims of humanity,— ay, doubly false by heaping abuse upon a child for doing good to a suffering

one,— and that parent should not complain, if the child loves and respects no more. The mere tie of relationship is not enough, and I thank God that it is not!

My mother readily consented to my request; so, one bright Saturday afternoon, I got into a coach and rode to my uncle's. My reception was all that I could wish. As I was very faint, and had rode too far for my strength, my uncle took me in his arms, and carried me into the house and laid me on a bed, which looked so nice that it seemed to be almost a luxury to be sick with such a bed to lie in. The coverlet was as white as snow, and adjusted with taste, and an eye to comfort. My aunt soon made her appearance, with a strengthening cordial, which quickly revived me.

As my uncle and aunt stood over me, I gazed into their benevolent faces, and thought how good they looked, and what a happy home Helen Means must have. My uncle looked very much like my father, and had the same warm heart; and Aunt Eaton was every way worthy of him. She was one of the good-natured, whole-souled women, who wanted to relieve all the world. No one ever left her door hungry, and she had a kind word for the most unworthy; and so her influence was purifying and ennobling. She was truly a preacher of righteousness,— good deeds, like twin-sisters, went hand in hand with good words. Alas! how often are they separated, as wide as the poles! Good words are dog-cheap;

but good works are far too dear, even for the elect. In a brief period, I arose and walked into the sitting-room, and sat down upon the sofa, where I was soon joined by my uncle; who came in with such a good, self-satisfied look, that it made me happy to behold it. He was leading a lovely little girl, so lovely that for a moment it was difficult to realize that it was Helen. And yet it was she. The poor, forsaken, foully-wronged child stood before me. But O, how changed! Her skin was now very white, lips red as crimson, and her cheeks slightly flushed. Her sweet blue eyes were radiant with hope and joy. Her dress of the purest white, with a blue ribbon around her neck and waist, composed a wardrobe well adapted to her form and complexion. A better could not have been chosen, to make her appear interesting and lovely. I gazed with surprise and admiration, and thought I had never seen such a beautiful child.

She colored deeply when she saw me, and I felt the blood rush to my face. How different were our feelings now from what they were when I frequently saw her a little ragged, dirty child. I pitied her then,— now she seemed like something sacred and holy. It may be that those who complain that their children are slighted are themselves the cause of it. Nothing under God's heaven is so well fitted to gain the admiration and love of *human* beings as a little child. It needs but to be treated like a human being, kept tidy and dressed neatly;

and for the latter ye may pattern of the birds, or flowers, or the trees. Examine every leaf, and you will find all fashioned after the beautiful. Nature is a great teacher; heed ye her lessons well. I would not encourage extravagance; O no,—that is not required; but rather faithfulness to the teachings of nature. The inner often takes its coloring from the outer. Perhaps it may be said they daguerreotype each other.

My uncle regarded us a moment with a benignant face, and then, as he would have treated older children, turned and left us alone. Helen regained her courage in a degree, and came timidly forward, and threw her arms around my neck and kissed me. I returned her caresses. She was the first to speak.

"You look sick, Henri," she said. "Are you sick?"

"I am not very well," I replied. "I have been sick a long time, and I am very weak now."

"You must not go home again until you are well," she said, taking her seat by my side.

"Is this a good place for sick folks?"

"O, yes, Henri. I was very sick, but your uncle and aunt — now my father and mother — were so good to me, and took such good care of me, that I soon got well. I was very happy to be with such good people when I was sick; and now that I am well, I am happy every day,—happy as an angel, Henri!"

"Then our sufferings have not been in vain. I told you, Helen, that deliverance should come. Thank God!"

"But how you have suffered, Henri! I cannot tell you how grateful I am. I cannot tell you how — how impossible it seems to ever pay you so great a debt!"

"It is all paid now. You are saved and happy, and the knowledge of this fills my heart with such pure joy, that I would not part with it for the world."

"But it has caused you so much pain, and made your mother hate you!"

"A fig for the pain! Who would not suffer a little inconvenience for the good of another, especially when it fills his own cup with joy? In a world where there is so much sin and wrong, there must be some to suffer for the good of others. And surely my sufferings have been but as a drop in the bucket."

"Say not so, Henri. It is not a little thing to be brought nigh unto death twice, for the good of another. You have been beaten and spurned from the presence of your mother; and you suffer now, Henri; you look pale and sickly."

"That will do, Helen. I shall soon fancy that I am quite a martyr, if you say much more."

"And so you are, Henri; for you have barely escaped death."

Here my uncle and aunt came in, which interrupted our conversation. The latter wept when she realized

how sickly I was. How I thanked her in my heart for those tears! Blessings upon all those who have such warm, kind hearts!

"Well, well," said my uncle, "dry your tears, Emma; for you and Helen will soon make him better, I'll warrant."

"I hope so," said my aunt. "The poor child must have been very sick!" She now went out, and returned in a few minutes with a nice bowl of gruel. Reader, if you were ever sick, and took a long ride after you were convalescent, and had brought to you, on your return, by loving hands, a bowl of nicely-seasoned gruel or milk-porridge, you will not doubt when I tell you that I never in my life tasted of any kind of food more agreeable to the palate than that bowl of gruel.

I remained at my uncle's for two months, and my health rapidly improved. How could it be otherwise, when so much love and kindness were lavished upon me? I heard from home twice; Jane wrote, and Mrs. Stewart. They said that mother had inquired for my health, but said nothing in relation to my return. I felt very sure that she had no particular anxiety to see me, and that I could return the compliment.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VICTORY.

"WELCOME home again!" said Mrs. Stewart, as I leaped from the coach. "How you have improved! I never expected to see you so well again. Bless you, dear!" and she embraced me with all the affection of the most loving of mothers. She had a long story to tell me of what had taken place during my absence. What grieved me most was the very frequent calls of Deacon Webber. It did not look right, but very suspicious. I felt that it would result in no good, and Mrs. Stewart was also very much troubled.

Sister Jane now made her appearance, and seemed very glad to see me, and we greeted each other with true brotherly and sisterly love. I soon saw mother and the rest of the family, and shook hands with them all. The greeting was not very cordial, but it was as much so as could have been expected, under the circumstances.

I had been at home but a few days, when I received a message from my mother, commanding my immediate presence.

I obeyed the summons, and found her and Deacon

Webber sitting precisely as I last saw them. I was severely tempted to say something very insulting; but, on second thought, concluded that I had better not.

My mother asked me to be seated, and then the deacon arose very pompously, as though he was about to say something of great importance, looking all the time so very pious, the old wolf!

"Young man," said he, "have you repented of your past transgressions?"

"Who put you in inquisitor general?" I asked.

"None of your insolence, sir!" he replied. "If you do not humble yourself, and answer me respectfully, the greater will be your punishment."

This talk almost made me furious. "Deacon Webber," I said, "no more of your hypocritical cant, and rascally nonsense! and as to your insulting questions, I will not answer one of them!"

He trembled and sprang towards me; and I caught up a chair, and stood on the defensive, ready to strike if he should but lay his hand upon me. It would have pleased me well, just then, to have hit the deacon, and hit him hard. I expected that he would attempt to take the chair from me, but he did not; and when I thought how young I was, I despised him for his cowardice.

"Put down that chair!" said my mother.

"I will," I replied, "when the deacon occupies a less threatening attitude."

"Henri, your conduct is strange and unaccountable! Are you crazy?" she said, bursting into tears.

"I don't think I am crazy; but I am bound to defend myself!"

The deacon stood and surveyed me, as if he was somewhat uncertain whether I was a human being or something more. I fancied he thought me his evil genius. He really seemed to be afraid of me, and I was not sorry; for I knew well enough that he really ached to get hold of me, and manifest his good-will by giving me a few of his impressive arguments. But I had made up my mind that, if he offered to lay his hand upon me, he would find me very much inclined to defend myself. Though but a boy, he would have found me an earnest one, when thus roused. Just at that time, a blow upon the head, from the weapon I held in my hands, might have been rather serious. I know that I was rash; but I had the utmost abhorrence of the deacon. My hatred was bitter and intense; and, if he had touched me, even with the approval of my mother, every drop of blood in my veins would have cried out revenge, and perchance not in vain.

In due time he became convinced that I was not disposed to yield the floor; so he sat down. I followed his example, casting upon him looks of hatred and contempt.

My mother seemed to tremble with passion and indignation at my conduct. But I thought she felt afraid of me, and that gave me renewed courage. I do not sup-

pose that she wanted the deacon to do me any lasting injury; but she was particularly anxious that I should treat him with a great deal of deference, and be very humble, and answer his questions in a repentant spirit, and quietly acquiesce in the decision they had made concerning my great sins, which were so severely felt by the deacon. She had hoped that the previous interview, my subsequent sickness, and some manifestations of kindness, might have weakened and subdued me. But she found me more determined than ever; and this was extremely mortifying.

Taking my eyes from the deacon, I fixed them boldly upon her. "You have sent for me," said I, "giving me to understand that business of importance demanded my attention. If you have anything to say to me of an important nature, it is my duty to hear it, I suppose; but what has Deacon Webber to do about it?"

"The crime was committed against him, and he should have some voice in relation to the punishment which you are to receive."

"Very convincing, truly! But I should think it necessary to prove that he has suffered wrong, before he inflicts punishment."

"He knows that."

"I don't believe it, for I know that he has suffered no wrong at my hands."

"Where is my horse, my wagon and my little servant?" said the deacon.

"I am not their keeper, deacon; so I cannot inform you," I replied.

"He has grievously suffered at your hands, Henri, and restitution should be made, as far as in your power," remarked my mother; "and your punishment should be in accordance with the deeds of wrong."

"I have not wronged him at all; but he has wronged me, and so have you; and Helen Means was shamefully abused by you both!"

"This is scandalous!" said the deacon.

"More than that," I replied; "it was outrageous!"

"I am surprised, Henri," said my mother, "that you should look and talk so strangely. Have you forgotten that you are but fifteen?"

"And 'I am surprised that you should look and talk so strangely.' No, mother, I have not forgotten that; and I remember something equally important."

"What is that?"

"That I shall be sixteen in a few weeks. But what has this to do with the important subject to which I am to listen?"

"Nothing; only, when you talk to those who are so much older, you should be more respectful."

"I am respectful, when they deserve it."

"Any one would suppose you to be twenty-five, instead of fifteen, to hear you talk."

"I thank you for the compliment. If I *were* twenty-five, things would be different from what they are now. Some folks would be careful what they *did*, and where they *went*, and how long they *stayed!*"

Here the deacon arose, looking very angry, and said he would not bear these insults any longer, and took his hat and marched out of the house. While I stood at the window, watching his retreating footsteps, mother said,

"I beg of you not to talk any more as you have done, or I shall think you insane. Do be more reasonable."

"I try to adapt myself to the company I am in; and, under present circumstances, it is the best I can do. Have you anything more that you wish to say?"

"Yes, but I have been waiting for you to grow calm, so that I could talk to you in relation to the subject which has been so long under consideration. We have con——"

"Who 's we?" I inquired, interrupting her.

"Deacon Webber and myself."

"I thought it very probable; but go on, if you please."

"I could not well do otherwise than consult Deacon Webber; for, through your instrumentality, he has been a great sufferer. Why you have done as you have, I cannot tell; but I hope that you have not been so bad as

your actions would indicate. We have chosen the mildest punishment which the circumstances would admit of,— a punishment which may seem severe now, but, in the end, it may place you in a position honorable to yourself and family. You are to go into the navy, as a midshipman."

"I have no taste for the navy, mother; and I shall consult my guardian before I assent to that arrangement."

"I don't want the least opposition from you to this plan. It will be best for you to submit. Come, be a good boy once!"

"This, you say, is my punishment; and I have only done good!"

"Don't call such conduct good; for you are sinful enough already. I am your mother, and it is your duty to obey me."

"Not in such a case as this. I abhor such baseness. Did you and the deacon hatch that out, after setting three months? Quite a bantling!"

"Do not anger me, Henri, or I may say and do what I shall be sorry for."

"I do not wish to excite you, or put you in a passion; but I have no inclination for the life you have chosen for me."

"Why not?"

"I have already told you that I have no taste for it;

and, if I had, I should not be willing to enter the navy, if I was sent there to punish me for performing a good act. I have already suffered severely, and you ought to be satisfied."

"It is blasphemy, Henri, to call wickedness and wrong goodness."

"That may all be true; so some people had better be careful what they say. I aided in the escape of Helen Means, and God knows that I did well; and, had I died for it, the thought would have made my last moments sweet!"

"Then there is no repentance?"

"Repentance! Do you think that I could be so base as to repent of that? When I repent of such a deed, may the good Lord visit me with his wrath!"

"Be careful, Henri, or he will. The evil one has blinded you, that he may drag your soul down to perdition."

"I don't believe it, mother. God will not punish me for a deed like that, unless he is a monster. I have but imitated the example of his Son, and suffered for doing good; so don't be frightened, if I claim that, in so far as the deed is concerned that you wish to punish me for, I am like his Son."

"Why Henri! how you do talk! You make my blood run cold. For a human being to compare himself to

Christ is blasphemy. If you go on in this way, you will be left to commit the sin which can never be forgiven."

"I don't fear that, in the least. Deacon Webber would be glad to shut me out of heaven, I doubt not; but he has not the power. He don't happen to have the key. God only punishes for evil deeds, but never for good ones."

"Well, let that pass. If you will obey me in this, we shall have no further trouble. In a few weeks everything will be ready for your departure."

"You had better make up your mind that I shall not enter the navy. I shall not, if I can help it, submit to any punishment for the good I have done. I am very sure that my guardian will not allow one cent of my share of the property to be used for the object you and the deacon have in view; and Uncle Thomas would *never* consent that I should be forced to adopt that to which I am so much opposed."

"Your uncle has nothing to do about it, and it will not be well for him to interfere. I shall consult your guardian at once."

"So shall I; and, if need be, Uncle Thomas will consult him too. It is better for all concerned that this matter should be left where it is; for I know that its further agitation is useless, and can result in no good."

"If you were not a vile, ungrateful boy," said my

mother, bursting into tears, "you would do as I desire. You were always a wicked, disobedient child!"

So saying, she left the room. I went, without delay, to consult with my guardian; and when I had told him what my mother had said, he replied,

"The deuce take it! You enter the navy! You be a midshipman! What can the old lady be thinking about, to wish to make a midshipman of you? That old, black fellow, Webber, is at the bottom of it, I'll warrant you. Well, well, what say, — how would you like it?"

"Mr. Edgarton," said I, "I should not like it at all."

"Just so, just so. I knew you would not; no place for you. Better be a farmer,— most independent life there is,— healthiest, too. Did you tell your mother that you did not wish to enter the navy?"

"I did; and, what's more, I told her plainly that I would not do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Square as a brick! What said she to that?"

"She said that I should do as she wished,— that I *must* obey, and she would immediately consult you."

"Consult me! What will she consult me for,— does she suppose that I shall take my horsewhip and drive you there?"

"No, but she wants you to hand over a little cash,— one or two cool hundreds, that's all."

"Not a cent for any such purpose! — not one cent! So she may set her heart at rest."

"You are very kind," I replied.

"Not a bit of it,— duty, that 's all. But how do you and the deacon get along? He told me that he had a long bill against you."

"And I intend to settle it, one of these days,— at least, to my satisfaction."

"Don't be rash, boy,— have a care. Have you seen him lately?"

"I have just had a little skirmish with him."

"You have,— how 's that?"

"He said that I was very insulting; and so he came at me with the intention of teaching me to be a little more respectful to my *superiors!*"

"What did you do — run?"

"Not I, Mr. Edgarton; I caught up a chair, and he did not dare to touch me!"

"You did! Bravo! You caught up a chair,— ha, ha, ha! Meant to hit him,— give him a smash — hey? ha, ha, ha! What an old fool, to be afraid of such a little pale-face as you!"

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Edgarton, I am pretty strong and gritty, and he knew he would catch it."

"O, you little fighting-cock, you! I guess you will do for the navy, after all. I shall shell out about five hundred."

"If you do, I will fight you, if ever I get large enough! I'll give you one gun, a real rouser, and I will blow you up now!"

"'I am so large that you cannot blow me up very high; so I don't tremble a bit. If you had a chair, I might be frightened,—ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope not, I am sure."

"But you scared the deacon — good! I like you all the better for it. I like to see a little spunk. The old fool, to be frightened at a boy with a chair! — ha, ha, ha, ha! what a coward! He says that you are a terrible wicked chap— 'prone to evil as the sparks fly upwards.' Don't you think he feels badly, because you are so wicked — hey? Won't he pray for you before he goes to bed to-night? — ha, ha, ha!" and he gave me two or three nudges and punches in my sides, as he went on talking and laughing.

"Well, Mr. Edgarton, I want a true friend, just now; and you must stand by me."

"Never fear — never fear! I'll put you through safe. But don't go yet. You han't been into the house. I'll tell ye what, you shall stop to dinner, and I will kill one of my best chickens,— so walk in."

I could not say no to such a warm-hearted invitation, and I remained till after dinner. We had a merry time; for, every little while, Mr. Edgarton would burst out about the chair and the deacon, and laugh as hearty as

ever. He said it was no wonder that my mother wanted to put me into the navy, when I could frighten a big, old, black deacon with a chair!

After some more useless controversy and hard talk with my mother about the navy, the whole matter was dropped, greatly to my satisfaction; for I had won the victory, and for the future had little to fear.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMPENDING DOOM.

I WAS still comparatively weak, and my health far from good. My system had received a severe shock, and I had taken too many poisonous medicines to allow me to cherish any reasonable hope of being well at present. After a few weeks devoted to work and play, I returned to my books and school.

The deacon still visited my mother, and his calls became more frequent and protracted. They were together every day and evening. This was alarming,—but what could I do? At last, Jane, much to my satisfaction, broached the subject to me, and expressed her fears that it was their intention to marry soon. She thought the children ought to use their influence to prevent it, if possible. She informed me that the other children were very anxious to escape a calamity so much to be dreaded.

As much as they had clung to mother and blamed me, they could not bear the idea that Deacon Webber should ever hold the relation of a father-in-law to them. They

had no more confidence in him than I. There had been more cordiality between them and me, of late; for Jane and Mrs. Stewart labored to show them how matters stood, and that I was not so much to blame as they had supposed, having only heard one side of the question. It was at length decided that we should consult together as to the best means to be used to accomplish the object in view, the prevention of a great evil. I found them all determined to oppose the marriage, if one was intended, and not at all inclined to own the deacon a relative of theirs. Here was union, for once; and we resolved to remonstrate with mother on the impropriety, folly, ay, madness of uniting her destiny with his.

Our meeting was not entirely in vain, for a mutual reconciliation took place. I heartily rejoiced at this, for I knew that we should all be better and happier. My heart yearned, when not embittered by contention, for their sympathy and love. I had often felt that our feelings and treatment of each other were unnatural and wicked. It was always painful to Mrs. Stewart, and she labored hard to remove the evil.

During our interview, Thomas expressed a wish, which was seconded by the rest, that I should give them all the facts in relation to Helen Means. I complied with their request, and gave them the whole story, and the part I had acted in it. When they had heard me through, they bitterly regretted the course they had taken. I was

rejoiced to find that they were better at heart than I anticipated, and they were pleased to learn that I was worthy of confidence and love.

They now felt more keenly than ever the utter impossibility of any other result but misery, deep and lasting, from a union between the deacon and mother.

The next day, the presence of my mother was requested in the same room where I had twice been summoned. Our relative positions had changed, for I had now summoned her. She started and became very pale when she saw who were present. I read her thoughts at a glance, and she probably read ours. Lizzy handed her a chair, and asked her to sit down.

"This is a strange proceeding," she remarked; "a formal summons from my own children. What does this mean?"

"We think," said Thomas, with some hesitation, "that we have something of deep and vital importance to say to you,— important to your welfare, and vitally important to ours!"

"I should suppose so by your looks," she replied. "What can be the nature of it? for your course is unusual and strange."

"The mystery will soon be solved, mother. We wish to talk with you of Deacon Webber and yourself," Thomas continued.

"I am ready to hear all you have to offer," she replied.

"The intimacy between you and Deacon Webber has caused us to feel much anxiety for the welfare of the family. Since Mrs. Webber's death, he has called to see you almost every day or evening. What his object is we know not; but we think it must be of a serious character, for of late nearly half of his time is spent with you."

"What is that to you?" she said, biting her lips.

"We wish to know whether rumor tells the truth, that you have engaged to marry Deacon Webber."

"Well, supposing I have,— what then?"

"If it is so, mother, or you have any such thought or intention, we beg of you, if not for your own welfare, for the welfare of your children and friends, to pause and reflect. The step once taken, can never be recalled."

"I shall not ask my children whether I shall marry or not. I think I know as well what my own welfare is as you. I think I know as well what is for your good. I am old enough to take care of myself, and regulate my own affairs; and when I wish for advice, especially from my children, I will let them know it."

"But we beseech you to hear us, and not act hastily in this matter. We do not know that it 's your intention to marry Deacon Webber; but, if it is, we feel called upon to utter our most solemn protest against it. We cannot but regard such a step with the deepest abhorrence."

"Pretty children, you are! to talk thus to your

mother. I expected nothing better from Henri, for he has ever thwarted my wishes when in his power. But I did expect different treatment from the rest of you. You are now united to drive me from my purpose; but you shall not succeed. I shall do my duty, in spite of your threats. The salvation of this house may depend on this union."

"I should think that the word ruin would convey the idea better," I remarked.

"Keep your evil tongue still, Henri! I have had enough of your impudence already!"

"I merely made the suggestion, thinking that the mistake would be very natural, under the circumstances. We are sure that utter ruin would be the result. We cannot say less than this."

"I shall hear no more from any of you. You are all an ungrateful set; and, instead of giving heed to your wishes, I shall consult my own happiness, and the welfare of those who are leagued against me. Go about your business, every one of you, and don't mention the subject to me again!"

"We have not said a tithe of what we wish to say," remarked Thomas.

"You have said too much, already, and I'll hear no more!" She now left us, shutting the door after her with great violence. Thus it was made plain to us that she had

determined to marry Deacon Webber, and naught that we could do or say would alter her fatal resolution. We all thought it best, after consulting our guardian, to remain at home, for the sake of George and Charlotte, who were too young to leave it.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MARRIAGE AND ITS RESULTS.

THANKSGIVING days in past years had been days of pleasure to us. A number of relatives usually gathered at our house; so that, with good company and good cheer, we regarded the day as our annual jubilee. How different were our feelings this year, as Thanksgiving day approached! It seemed to be shrouded in gloom and misery. I need not tell you that it was the appointed time for the marriage of mother and Deacon Webber. A large company assembled, on the evening of that day, to witness what seemed to me a horrible farce. For a brief period, all went well; but in a few months our home, bad enough before, became a place scarcely endurable. How gloomy, how dark, were those long winter months! It seemed as though they would last forever. At least, our home, I thought, will never know spring-time and summer again.

The deacon came to our house, with his whole family, consisting of two sons and three daughters; and they were worthy of their sire, with the exception of the babe,

who grew every day more beautiful, and Mrs. Stewart, having the whole care of her, loved her dearly. And we all loved little Katy, notwithstanding the hatred we bore her father. His other children were too much like himself to merit our regard, or win our affection and esteem. The elder brother and sister were professors of religion, and as wicked as they were pious. They kept the Sabbath strictly, attended all the religious meetings, and made great pretensions to godliness; but that was as far as their piety went. As to practical religion, and Christ-like goodness, they knew nothing about them, and cared less. Their idea of Christianity was this,— to live so as to escape the miseries of hell and gain the bliss and glory of heaven; an idea not one whit in advance of the heathen. They would have called St. James' exposition of pure and undefiled religion, before God the Father, mere morality, scarcely worthy of the notice of Christians.

It is bad enough, always, to bring together in this way two sets of children; but in our case it was madness. Sometimes we had a regular pitched battle, beginning in words and ending in blows. These conflicts were not confined alone to me.

In the summer following the marriage, Mrs. Stewart, at the request of my mother, made a rich cake for Rose Webber, the youngest but one of the deacon's children, to carry to a children's pic-nic. But she, being a very greedy child, and having never been accustomed to rich

cake, cut off a slice and ate it. Soon after, feeling hungry, I went to the cupboard for a luncheon; and seeing the cake, and not knowing for whom it was made, I very carelessly took it up and broke off a piece, that did not look as though it came from the hands of a mother-in-law. With the cake, and a generous slice of cheese, I sat down to regale myself at my leisure, when in came Rose, after her cake. She was furious when she saw what I had done. She sprang at me like a young tigress, snatching the cake from my hand and throwing it upon the floor. "Thief! Thief!" she cried.

"Don't call me a thief," said I, "or I will teach you better manners!"

"You are a thief, old Hen Eaton, and I will tell my father of you!" So saying, she snatched the cake from the floor, and threw it in my face.

I was exasperated beyond endurance. I caught her, and boxed her ears until she promised better fashions. But I soon had the whole pack upon me, and a regular fight ensued, when I should have got most roughly handled, if brother Thomas had not come to my relief. After some hard knocks, we were separated by Mrs. Stewart.

She was the same good soul, amid all this din and confusion. But, if it had not been for her great love for me, and her attachment to little Katy, who seemed to regard her as a mother, and a promise to my father, she would

have left us; for her whole soul abhorred this miserable strife and confusion.

Whatever might be said of my mother in other respects, she was never mean and close. She spent her money freely for everything that was really needful; and as many of the luxuries of life were provided for herself and family as were desirable. She freely gave for purposes of charity, for the support of the gospel, and she was ever anxious to fully remunerate those who toiled for her or hers.

The deacon was the reverse of this, with the exception of what he gave for religious purposes. In matters of religion he *seemed* to be very liberal. With a soul so little, a disposition so mean, he could not patiently submit to our manner of life. He was ever fretting about our useless extravagance. "Every day," he said, "a large amount is wasted, which ought to be used for pious purposes,— to send the gospel to the heathen, and furnish the poor with Bibles." If he had seen a man starving, I think he would have prescribed a Bible or a religious tract, instead of giving him something to eat. If people complained of destitution, they must trust in the Lord. All this was mortifying to mother; for she began to realize that he was not that perfect pattern she had supposed him to be. I sometimes thought she despised his mean, niggard soul.

She witnessed some of his diabolical temper, not only

with his own children, but with hers also. I felt that she would soon get enough of him; — at least, I hoped so.

Soon after he had taken up his abode with us, with his Ishmaelitish tribe, he and Job, his youngest son, were engaged in chopping wood at the door. Job was cutting small, round wood. While thus engaged, a stick which he had struck rather carelessly flew and hit his father on the head, and almost knocked him down. The deacon was enraged; he caught up the stick of wood, and laid it over poor Job in a most savage manner, and he did not stop until mother interfered. As it was, Job was laid up for nearly a week. He once gave my sister Charlotte a blow which sent her reeling to the floor, because she did not fill his filthy black pipe as he desired it to be done. I was not at home at the time; but it created a great uproar, nevertheless. My brothers threatened, and my sisters wept; while Hezekiah and Hannah stood by and mocked them, — the unfeeling wretches!

The deacon had cautioned us all to be careful and lock the stable-doors at night; for a number of horses had been stolen, of late, in our town and the towns adjoining. My youngest brother, George, accidentally left the door unlocked, and the deacon's best horse was stolen.

The first time Thomas and myself were absent, the deacon took him down cellar, and beat him in a most horrible manner. I returned, soon after, and found Mrs. Stewart in tears. I asked the cause. She led me to

George, who lay groaning in his bed. When I looked at his bleeding back, I swore revenge. Mrs. Stewart begged me to desist, but I would not listen. I armed myself with a cowhide, and rushed into the room where the deacon was sitting with my mother, explaining to her the necessity of what he called a severe chastisement. I gave him blow after blow, in rapid succession, until I felled him to the floor. My mother screamed, and in rushed Job and Hannah. "Assassin!" said Job, and he and Hannah collared me, and attempted to take the cowhide from me. I struck Job with it in such a manner that he was glad to let go his hold. They both left the room in terror, as if they thought me mad, and it was dangerous to remain in my presence. I was horror-struck at what I had done, and I caught my hat and fled. I met Mrs. Stewart as I rushed from the house, who inquired, in a tone of agony, what was the matter. I did not answer, but ran for dear life, without slackening my pace, until I had gone more than a mile, when I sank down, from sheer exhaustion.

As I lay upon the ground, I had ample time for reflection. Not very pleasant thoughts thronged my mind. What if I had killed Deacon Webber? How horrible it would be to die for such a scoundrel! Then I thought it could not be possible that I had killed him. I hoped not, at least. What would be the result of this, if he lived? What would they do to me? I fancied I did not care

much. The deacon needed a lesson long ago, and he had received it at last. Mr. Edgarton would say now that I had settled that "long bill."

But what should I do, under such unfortunate circumstances? I must not return home,—that I decided at once; and yet it was almost night. I resolved to go to my uncle's immediately, as quickly as my feet would carry me there. Night soon came on, and often was I obliged to stop and inquire my way. It was very dark, and twice I mistook the road, and went some distance in a wrong direction. It seemed cruel to be obliged to retrace my steps.

It was one o'clock when I reached my uncle's house. O! how glad I was, for I was weary, hungry and cold. They were all fast locked in the arms of sleep; but I quickly aroused them. Greatly surprised were they to see me at that hour of the night; and more surprised still, when they learned that I had come on foot and alone. After partaking of a substantial supper, I told them my story. They rather blamed me, and Helen chided not a little. True, they were shocked at the horrid brutality of the deacon; but they would not justify me for being brutal also. It was decided that I must not return home,—at least, for the present.

CHAPTER X.

NEWS FROM HOME.

AFTER I had been at my uncle's two weeks, and not hearing a word from home, I wrote to Jane; and received the following letter in reply:

"O, Henri! how glad I was to hear from you! We "were very anxious on your account; for we knew not "what had become of you, but were in hopes you had "gone to uncle's. How glad I am that you have a place "to flee to, where you can find a good home; for you "cannot return here again! Why did mother ever marry "that terrible man? I will answer your inquiries as well "as I am able.

"The deacon's head was badly hurt; but he revived in "a few minutes after you left, and rushed out in search "of you, looking like a wild maniac. He said that he "would have your heart's blood, and send your black "soul shrieking down to hell! It was terrible to see "him rave. Mother tried to pacify him; but he thrust "her from him with great violence, while his eyes shot "gleams of bitter hatred. When he found that you had

"fled beyond his reach, he raved still more. I will not "repeat his horrible words, for the thought of them "makes me sick. At last he sank down exhausted, and "mother washed and dressed his head, all of the time "weeping bitterly. George is getting well fast. He was "most shamefully whipped. In his sleep he often lives "over again that fearful scene in the cellar. First he "prays for mercy; then curses his tormentor, and "threatens terrible vengeance. Your suggestion, that "our damnation would be the result of this marriage, has "proved true; for it has been, so far, and the future is "all dark. I shudder to think what kind of dispositions "we shall have, if this state of things continues. I won- "der not that you thought of vengeance, when you looked "upon the many wounds and bruises of your poor "brother; and yet I cannot justify you in taking *such* "vengeance. O, Henri! it is horrible! Only think, "your mother's husband!

"Job was not much hurt, but considerably frightened. "What strength you have when angry, and what a "temper you have! You are too passionate. You must "learn to govern your temper, and curb your passions, "or you will some day rush headlong to destruction. "Begin now, dear brother; — now, before it is too late!

"The tumult had subsided when Thomas returned. "He was greatly excited when told what had taken place. "He said that hanging would be too good for the deacon;

"for no punishment was bad enough for such a brutal "wretch!

"If George had purposely left the door open or un- "locked, it would have been different. I fear that boys "often suffer severely for doing what every one is liable "to do. George turned the key, he says, and thought "the door was locked; and most likely it was, for a false "key might have been used. The deacon was deterred "from sending an officer after you by the threats of "Thomas; who told him that if he moved an inch in the "matter, he would bring the whole subject before the "church, and also make him feel the full force of the "law for his abuse of George. He is a miserable coward, "and fears the loss of his reputation for piety and godli- "ness! I don't think that he would feel his soul at all "safe out of the church. They say he talked beautifully "last night at the prayer-meeting; and I suppose he "might have said some good things, for it is not a very "difficult matter. The devil, it is said, can change him- "self into an angel of light. The deacon has been a "hypocrite so long, that he truly thinks himself a good "man, and one of the elect. I do not wish that he should "be cast into the pit; but, in spite of my peculiar views, "I sometimes think it a fitting place for him. Wicked, "am I not? Such thoughts do not stay long in my head, "and my heart always rejects them.

"Mrs. Stewart sends her love to her dear Henri, and

"hopes he will become a better boy, and not allow his "passions to rage so fearfully. She says that you have "one of the best of hearts; but your passions are so vio- "lent that one can hardly feel safe in your presence! "She hopes that you will never return here again; at "least, while Deacon Webber lives; for she is fearful that "blood would be shed, should you meet again. I tell "her that some blood was shed when you last met. Mrs. "Stewart would leave here now, I think, if it were not "for little Katy. She is rather imaginative, and she "will have it that Katy looks like her lost Lelia. She "is always talking of Lelia and you. Poor woman,— I "pity her!

"You will not be surprised to learn that the Eatons "and Webbers detest each other more than ever now. "The pious Hezekiah and Hannah are getting to be "more pious and more wicked. Chips of the old block! "you would say. O, what a beautiful life we lead! "The deacon makes longer prayers than ever, and says "grace at every meal! If he should go to that wicked "place,— to which you, of course, are doomed,— I think "he would say his prayers even there.

"I want to see Helen Means very much. I can "realize now how fearfully she must have suffered; and "I thank you, from my heart, for rescuing her from the "monster who held her in his grasp. That was a noble "deed, and Heaven will bless you for it.

"Mr. Edgarton has been to see the deacon; and he "says that he gave him a piece of his mind, and told "him not to strike an Eaton again. 'That Henri,' said "he, 'is the spunkiest little chap that I ever laid my "eyes on! Why, the little rascal said that he meant to "settle the deacon's long bill to his own satisfaction; ha! "ha, ha! and, by hokie, he 's done it!' But my sheet "is full. Good-by. JANE."

My dear, good sister! how I thanked her for this letter! I will try to reform my habits, for your sake, thought I; and for the sake of all the dear ones who love me!

I was better satisfied with the contents of the letter than I expected to be. They were certainly bad enough, but I was thankful they were no worse. I resolved to remain where I was for the present. My uncle and aunt were very obliging and kind; they could not have been more faithful in their care and attention to a dear child than they were to me. They delighted to do good, and make everybody around them happy. As for Helen, she was becoming every day more interesting. We attended the same school, and at home pursued our studies in company. And thus the cold days of winter passed pleasantly and rapidly away.

CHAPTER XI.

AN OLD ENEMY.

WHEN spring came, Helen and I often rambled in the fields gathering flowers, and when weary resting under some beautiful shady tree. I never had been so happy before. I was with those who loved me, and whom I loved, in return, with all the warm ardor of my impetuous nature. I did not live now in the midst of jarring discords, but of beautiful harmony. I should have been quite happy, if it had not been for thoughts of home and the past. I knew that, while I was so richly blest, my brothers and sisters were miserable.

One summer evening, after a heavy thunder-shower, Helen and I were taking one of our accustomed rambles, delighted with the thousand beautiful things which greeted us on every hand. It had not rained for many days before, and the earth was dry and parched with heat, the trees were dusty, and the air oppressive. After two hours' rain, what a change! The air was sweet and fresh, the leaves and grass clean and beautiful. The little rivulets, which had almost dried up, leaped forth again, seeking their old haunts among the flowers, laughing and singing

as they went on their way. All nature looked refreshed and joyous, and the birds sang most sweetly their evening songs.

As we were walking along, drinking in the harmony and beauty so lavishly spread around us, we unexpectedly encountered the villain from whom I rescued Helen the first time I ever saw her. His looks showed that he had continued the downward course of sin; for his appearance was repulsive, and his whole aspect forbidding.

"Ha! my old friend, Mr. Eaton!" he said. "Glad to see you, boy. We have an account to settle, and

'Now 's the day, and now 's the hour.'

Come, my young gentleman, you may get ready for such a —— licking as you never had before!"

I expostulated, and Helen begged of him to go peacefully away, and allow us to do the same. He gave a coarse laugh,— said that she was a beauty, and he liked her, and then made a most insulting and brutal proposal, as the only condition of my escape. This threw me into a violent passion, and my blood was up in a moment.

"You vile wretch, begone!" I cried, "or you will fare worse than you did before."

"I know it," he said, and he gave another brutal laugh, and sprang at me with tiger-like ferocity. After I had received one or two blows, and struck him as many, by a lucky hit I laid him at my feet. He arose quickly,

somewhat weakened, and came at me once more, when I again knocked him down and sprang upon him; but, as he promised better fashions, I desisted, and he arose and hastened away, frequently looking back, as though he was strongly inclined to try his hand once more.

I now turned to Helen, and she was deathly pale, and she gladly leaned on me for support. This was a diversion which we had not looked for, and which seemed not exactly appropriate for the occasion. It interrupted a very pleasant train of thought and conversation,— severed a golden chain, which could not then well be reünited; so we turned our course towards home.

"You tremble, Helen," said I, "but you need not fear."

"I was afraid you would be killed. Are you not badly hurt?"

"Not very,— just a little bruised, that's all."

"I hope we shall never see him again. How brutal he is!"

"He seems to be perfectly abandoned."

"How strange that he should act so!"

"I did not know but that I should require your help, as of yore."

"I am glad you did not."

"Why so? Would it hurt your feelings to take a stone and pound his head?"

"Yes, very much. I don't think that I should have hurt him much."

"I suppose not; but you hit him hard, the other time."

"I know I did; but it would be more difficult now."

"Well, Helen, I am glad it is so. I am sorry that I was obliged to strike him with such fury, but he would have it so. He won't care about another fight with me."

"But he may seek some means to be revenged upon you."

"I hope not, for I do not wish him harm."

In due time we arrived at home; when it was found, on examination, that I had some superfluous bumps, but the skin was not broken, and I was not much injured.

We saw our foe after that under different circumstances, and learned his name and history. He was the only child of a Mr. Austin,—of whom the reader will learn more, by and by. At the time we saw him, he was in prison, awaiting his trial for highway robbery and murder. He was convicted and executed. We visited him before and after his conviction, and then my enmity had ceased, and we did all that was in our power to smooth his pathway to the grave. He was melted by our kindness, and wished us to pardon him. When I told him that Helen was the little ragged girl who once lived with Deacon Webber, and whom I delivered out of his hands, he was greatly astonished. When we last saw him he

looked very miserable, but said that he felt resigned to his fate, and trusted in the mercy of God. He was weeping when we bade him a final farewell, and clung to our hands, as though we had the power to save him. My interviews with him had a beneficial influence upon me, and I resolved to curb my passions, and keep them in their place.

During this time, I frequently received letters from home, and things went on pretty much as they did before I left it. I will not pain the reader by relating the scenes which there transpired, but will close this chapter with a letter from brother Thomas. If there are expressions in Jane's or Thomas' letters which manifest a bad spirit, let the reader remember the circumstances by which they were surrounded. Circumstances will account for a lack of parental respect, and unchristian thought and allusions.

"I have a little bit of news for you, Henri, which, I "think, will remind you of old times, and please you into "the bargain. You know that we children formed the "determination not to be drudges to the deacon, and I "made bold to tell him so. Some two months since, he "brought home a little girl, whom he took from the poor-"house in a neighboring town. She looked bad enough, "when she came; but the saintly deacon must make her "look worse, if possible. Mrs. Stewart was sadly in his

"way; for she would be feeding and clothing her, making "her garments out of her old ones, and always keeping "her looking tidy and decent. What a kind and chari- "table woman she is,—always doing good! Mrs. Stew- "art's care did not save the poor child from cruel abuse. "If she did anything wrong, or the deacon imagined she "had done wrong (and his imagination in that line is "remarkably powerful), a brutal whipping was sure to "follow. Mother thought the whippings were too severe, "but he told her they were vitally requisite to the "child's welfare. The fact is, he must have something "to beat and mangle,— it is his nature, as much so as it "is the nature of the wolf to bite. We determined, "however, that this should not last long. The deacon "liked it too well, and we knew what was sport to "him was death to the child. A most brutal exhibition "of his diabolical passion and cruelty decided us to put "our plan into execution at once. Mary Flinn is awk- "ward and clumsy. She had the misfortune to fall with "a waiter of crockery, proving herself a decided *piece-* "*maker*,— but one who did not receive a blessing to be "coveted. The deacon was in the house at the time; "and when he saw the broken dishes, he beat her fear- "fully. He cut and bruised her most shamefully. Mrs. "Stewart, Jane and Lizzy, begged of him to stop; but it "only inflamed the passions of this fiend still more. "Mother interfered, at last, and saved the poor thing

"from further outrage. If I had been there, I know not "what I should have done. It was well for the deacon "that you were not present. Would n't there have been "an uproar?

"I had corresponded with a friend who was in search "of a little girl, and I wrote him in relation to the "late horrible affair, requesting him to meet me at a "given time and place, and take Mary home with him. "She is now twenty-five miles from here, and has a good "home. What a time we had, when the deacon learned "that she was gone! His rage was beautiful. It would "have done you good to have seen him. He threatened "to turn us all out of doors; but the old interloper can't "do it, and he knows it.

"I am happy to inform you that Hannah Webber is "married. Hezekiah is to be married soon, and is to "live on the old place. It would please me better if he "would remove to his '*own place.*' Jane is engaged to "a gentleman every way worthy of her. Mother's "health is very poor,— she looks pale and miserable. "She stands in great fear of her charming husband, and "I really believe despises him. Good! good! — don't "you say so? I suppose my letter is sufficiently long; "so, good-by. When the deacon is dead I will give you "an invitation to come — home.

"THOMAS EATON."

CHAPTER XII.

WELCOME VISITORS.—MRS. STEWART'S STORY.

Two years passed away, and I had not seen any of the members of our family, excepting my brothers. One summer afternoon, the stage stopped at the door of my uncle's, when out jumped Mrs. Stewart and my sister Jane. O, how glad I was to see them! I rushed into their arms, and kissed them again and again, with passionate delight. The joy seemed mutual. They expressed surprise in seeing me look so healthy, and remarked that I had grown very large and handsome. This flattery, or praise, sounded pleasantly enough in my ears; for, I am not ashamed to confess it, that I ever had a strong desire for true manly beauty. It is fashionable, I know, in the pulpit and out of it, to preach about the vanity of such things; and yet the preachers — both pulpit and lay — are as well pleased with the flattering words, which sometimes greet their ears, as the bright-eyed blooming girl, whom everybody styles the beauty of her native village.

Mrs. Stewart looked more careworn than I had ever seen her before, while sister Jane had grown more interesting; but over her face passed frequently an expression

of sadness, reminding one of a spring day, when the clouds ever and anon pass over the face of the sun, hiding its beaming smiles, which make the world look so glad and golden. But, nevertheless, her appearance was decidedly interesting. You could read in her aspect the dear, good-hearted girl, whose presence would always cause more sunshine than shadow.

Helen was absent when they arrived; she came home soon after, and I was proud to introduce her as the one I had rescued from Deacon Webber's tyranny. Mrs. Stewart started when she took her hand and gazed into her beautiful face, which at that moment brightened with child-like reverence and admiration. I wished myself in their places, when she and Jane pressed her to their hearts, and imprinted warm kisses upon her red lips. A strong friendship immediately sprang up between the parties, which was a source of happiness to us all. I felt proud of my sister, who was a number of years Helen's senior, when I saw how well they loved each other. Many pleasant rambles did we enjoy during their fortnight's visit, and the time passed rapidly and pleasantly away.

They gave us a history of home affairs, which had undergone no improvement since I left. It was interesting, but sad. Little Katy was still the same dear, affectionate creature, though her father had used every means in his power to spoil her. His treatment of her had been

such that there was no living being she feared so much. He frequently commanded her to bring something to him, — some article which he might or might not want. She would have obeyed him with alacrity, if she had not been afraid of him; and because she did not, he would whip her, and make her still more fearful. She must be trained, he said, and disciplined while young, or she would be ruined for this world and for the next. When abused by her father, she would ever fly to Mrs. Stewart, from whom she received so much sympathy and kindness that the evil effect of her father's brutal treatment was, in a measure, neutralized.

Finally, the deacon, after correcting her, would shut her up, lest she should run to Mrs. Stewart, and the good effects of her chastisement be destroyed.

"Poor little Katy!" said Jane; "doomed to be brutalized or die. Such abuse is too much for a sensitive, gentle creature, like her."

This brutality, to an affectionate little child, was almost enough to break the heart of Mrs. Stewart. The deacon thought it best not to interfere with my brothers and sisters in any other way than by fretting and scolding. My mother, who brought the great evil upon herself and children, was every day becoming more sickly and sad. She wished, by this time,— so thought Mrs. Stewart,— that she had hearkened to their warnings. I

felt, as I listened, that she was to be pitied, doomed to spend her life with such a detestable wretch.

Uncle took his carriage, and carried Mrs. Stewart and sister Jane home, and when he returned George and Charlotte came with him. While they were with us, we received a letter from Jane, stating that Deacon Webber had talked so insultingly to Mrs. Stewart, that she had left the house, and was boarding in the neighborhood. Uncle and aunt, very much to my satisfaction, resolved to offer her a home. He returned with George and Charlotte, and brought back Mrs. Stewart. She was affected to tears at her whole-hearted reception.

"Here," said my aunt, "you shall have a home as long as you live; and we will all try to make it a happy home."

"It is a happy home," said Helen, "always pleasant, always joyful."

"A paradise," I observed.

"With at least one angel in it, in your estimation," remarked my uncle.

"And two, in yours," I replied.

"Mrs. Stewart ought to be satisfied," said my aunt, "if your description is true. A happy, pleasant, joyful home,— a paradise with angels."

"I thank you all," she replied. "If poor little Katy were here, I should be very happy."

"Why did the old rascal turn you out of doors?" I inquired.

"Do not speak in that manner, Henri," said Mrs. Stewart. "It is wrong, even about your enemies."

"It is no more than the truth," I replied.

"But the truth is not to be spoken at all times," observed my uncle.

"Very true," replied Mrs. Stewart. "The deacon is the worst man I ever knew; but it is not well to call hard names. He was whipping Katy in an unmerciful manner, for a most trivial offence. I looked on until I could bear it no longer, when I snatched her up in my arms and ran to my room, shut the door, and locked it. The deacon followed, and threatened to burst it open, if I did not unfasten it. After some parleying, I unlocked it, and he walked in. Little Katy clung to me, and he did not offer to touch her, but heaped upon me abuse without measure, and ended by informing me that my room in the house was more desirable than my company. Knowing that Jane would befriend Katy as much as I could, I immediately left and went to one of the neighbors, where I remained until Mr. Eaton came after me.

"Poor little Katy! she will not trouble them many years. She is a delicate, sensitive child, and with such usage as she receives she cannot live long. How strange that a man should so abuse his own child!"

"Not very strange," I remarked; "for persons like

him must have somebody's child to abuse; and, as he is so very unfortunate in relation to those who are not his own, as a matter of course he must expend his cruelty upon his own children."

"I think he would like her better, if she had more of the Webber in her," said Mrs. Stewart. "She is entirely different from his other children. They are rough, hard-hearted, brutal; but she is gentle and affectionate. I often held her to my heart, and thought of my lost Lelia. O! if the deacon would give her to me, to be all my own, the deep yearning in my heart for the lost one would be in a measure satisfied. But that wound, I fear, will not be healed until I am laid in my grave." Mrs. Stewart was here so overcome by her strong emotion that she burst into tears. "Let the thought console you," said my aunt, "that you will meet the dear child in heaven."

"It does console me," she replied, "and I thank my God for the glorious hope." We all responded amen, and Mrs. Stewart's face beamed with the smile of reconciliation.

A brief period now passed away, and not a word was spoken. I was the first to break silence. "You made me a promise, long ago," I said, "to tell me the story of your husband and Lelia's death. Uncle, aunt and Helen, would all be glad to hear it; and, if it would not be asking too much, I wish you would tell it now."

"Not now, Henri," said my uncle. "You are not

considerate at all. Better postpone it, Mrs. Stewart, and not harrow up your feelings again at present."

"It is a painful story," said Mrs Stewart, "and really frightful. It is true that I have promised to tell it to Henri; and I would rather do it now, than to put it off any longer. When you have heard it, you will not be surprised that I sometimes weep."

She now sat some minutes, as if in deep thought, her head upon her hand, while we kept perfect silence. In due time, she began her startling narrative:

"When I was twenty years old, I married Mr. Stewart, the man of my choice,— the only one I ever loved. I was not disappointed in him; for he loved me faithfully, and so our home was happy, though humble. We both endeavored to do our whole duty, and our reward was peace and quiet happiness. We had but one child, and she was born four years after our marriage. O! what a sweet little girl she was, with the softest flaxen hair, and lips and cheeks as red as roses! How much I loved that gentle child!

"How welcome was her tender embrace, and how sweet the kiss which she so often impressed upon my lips! Sweeter than music was her childish prattle to me, and brighter than sunshine her angel presence.

"My first great grief was when my husband died. It was a fearful blow; and I should have been stricken to the earth, if it had not been for my angel child.

She was now my support, and more dear than ever. Alas! I was doomed to lose her, and in a way overwhelmingly crushing to a mother's heart. Mr. Stewart had been dead but three months, when Lelia was lost to me forever in this world. I sent her to a neighbor's, on an errand, and she never returned. The alarm was quickly given, and, though the whole neighborhood was aroused, and the woods searched over and over again, still, she could not be found, and not a trace of her was discovered. My God! what were my feelings when I knew that I must give up all hope! I prayed for death. In my terrible anguish, I felt to curse my Maker, hoping that in his anger He might strike me dead!

"Six months had passed away, and I had grown calm, and felt willing to drink the bitter cup which had been prepared for me. On such an evening as this, I sat alone in my little cottage, once so cheerful, now so dreary and lonely. As I sat listening to the moan of the winds, suddenly I saw the outlines of a man. I knew that he could not have come in at the door, and I covered my eyes, quaking with fear. I had no light but that which was emitted by a few coals that lay upon the hearth. When I uncovered my face, my husband stood before me, looking pale and sorrowful. I trembled violently, for I knew it was his ghost!

"My blood ran cold in my veins. I could not stir. I seemed glued to the chair, and my eyes were fixed on his,

and in vain I tried to turn them away. Although I was greatly frightened, I saw that he looked as if he wished to make known some important secret. He continued to gaze upon me for some moments, when, laying his hand upon his heart, he vanished from my sight.

"After his departure, I queried with myself whether I had been dreaming. But I knew that I had not been asleep. I was as wide awake as I ever was, and I had seen James Stewart as plainly as I ever saw him in my life. My blood had almost frozen in my veins as I looked upon him. It could not be a dream. I sat some moments as motionless as a statue. At last I shrieked and fainted. When I came out of my fainting fit, I was stiff and cold. I arose and staggered to my bed, crawled in, and soon fell asleep. The sun was high up in the heavens when I awoke. I arose, and, after taking some refreshments, walked out to reflect upon the fearful event of the last evening.

"Directly to the east of my cottage, hid behind a hill, was the house of Philip Austin, a man who, previous to my acquaintance with my husband, sought my hand in marriage. I rejected his suit at once, but he continued to urge it for a number of months. When my husband began to visit me, and he saw that I encouraged his attentions, he was furious. He cursed me, in the bitterness of his heart, and swore that he would not die without revenge. He was married soon after we were,

and, I supposed, he had forgotten his oath. I had noticed that, for some time past, he had studiously avoided me. Only once had he entered my house since my husband's death. When my child was missing, no one manifested so much zeal, seemingly, in trying to learn her fate, as he. I could not now keep him and his oath out of my mind. What could it mean? Had he revenged himself by murdering my child? I now recollected that he watched with Mr. Stewart on the night of his death.

"I walked in the direction of Austin's house, and soon saw him coming towards me. When he saw who I was, he halted, as though disposed to turn back; then, as if ashamed of his cowardice, he came boldly forward, apparently as unconcerned as an innocent man. When we met, I looked him steadily in the face, as though I would read his soul. He quailed before me. His shrinking before the gaze of a timid woman emboldened me, and I said,

"'Philip Austin! what have you done with my child?'

"What a change came over him, at these words! His dark eyes glared with fearful hate, and his face became black with fury. He foamed at the mouth, so great was his rage.

"'By all the powers of hell!' he exclaimed, 'you shall pay dearly for this damnable charge!'

"He sprang to the wall, and took off a stone, as though

he would murder me on the spot. But it suddenly dropped from his hands, and he fell upon his knees, trembling with fear.

"'O God!' he cried, 'all bloody, as when I killed her! Go away,— don't come near me! See! there is her father, looking as pale as when I gave him the poison!'

"He arose, quaking in every limb, and foamed and ground his teeth like a madman.

"'Ha, ha!' he cried; 'they are coming nearer,— see them! Look at that head where I beat it! She is coming to lay it against my face. Away! Don't touch me! Mercy! Good God! Mercy! mercy! They are gone now. I did but dream. What did I say, Laura? I did not mean it. I — I was driven to frenzy by your words; but think no more of it. Ha! they are coming again! Keep them off! keep them off, for God's sake! O, Stewart! Stewart! forgive me. He points to you. Yes — yes — I will! — I will tell her all!'

"He now sank upon the ground from exhaustion, overcome with terror. When he had sufficiently recovered, he told his fearful story. He never allowed the thought of revenge to escape from him for a single moment. As my husband was dangerously ill, he thought it the best time to accomplish his purpose. To murder Mr. Stewart and escape suspicion, he proposed to watch with him when his recovery was considered doubt-

ful. The doctor expected a change before morning. During the night he administered a deadly poison. Learning that I was happy with my child,— that she was a universal favorite,— he had decoyed her into the woods and killed her, and made her grave near the spot where he wrought the awful deed of blood. When he had finished his tale of horror, I turned from him with fearful loathing; but he begged me not to leave him.

"'See! there they come again!' he cried. 'O, God! that bloody head! It is coming close to me! No, no! do not touch me! There, there! go away, child,— go away, now! Poor thing! will the blood never stop? Will it always gush out so? Laura! my God! No, no! God has forsaken me, long ago. Laura! do, do keep him off! Don't you see him? Tell him to go,— he will mind you!'

"Thus he raved on, the poor wretch, foaming with anguish the most terrible. Notwithstanding the evil he had wrought me, I pitied him. I accompanied him home, and he immediately took his bed,— to leave it but once more. After lingering a few days in mortal agony, he died. O, how fearful it was for him, and how terrible it was for me! He told us, as well as he could, where he had buried her body; but we could never discover the spot. But no matter,— she is not there. O! if— if——"

She was now so overcome that she could go no further;

but wept, and wrung her hands in agony. We all wept in sympathy, and Helen arose and went to her, and threw her arms around her neck, and said, while the glittering drops rolled down her cheeks,

"I will be your child,— your own dear child!"

"Then you are not to be our child any more," said my aunt, a good deal affected.

Helen now left Mrs. Stewart, and went to Aunt Eaton, and, embracing her fondly, said,

"I will be daughter to you both,— love you all, for you are all so good."

"Spoken like my own brave girl!" said Uncle Eaton. "You shall love Mrs. Stewart as much as you wish, and be a daughter to her, and we will not be jealous of your affection. She needs consolation more than we do, for she has lost all she had."

"And Henri," said Helen, "shall be your son," placing my hand in Mrs. Stewart's.

"I am happy to have you for a mother," I said. "I have often wished that you held that endearing relation to me; for I have always yearned for a mother's whole-hearted love. I know that you love me; and I will always love you, and try to make you so happy that you will ever look forward with hope, and not backward with grief."

"That 's right!" said my aunt; "and, in seeking to make her happy, you will fill your own cup with joy."

"I knew you would say so," remarked my uncle;

"for you know by experience — it is the way to be happy in this world. Those who are so selfish that they never wish to do good to others, should not expect to taste the highest enjoyment. God has so ordered that those who strive, without selfishness, to help others, shall, at the same time, help themselves."

Mrs. Stewart embraced us both, and now shed tears of joy. "God bless you, my dear children!" she said, fervently; "and, with your love, I will try to forget the anguish and sorrows of the past."

We spent the remainder of the evening in pleasant and profitable conversation; and when I retired to my bed, that night, I felt that I had great reason to be thankful, in spite of the thick gloom which had hitherto enshrouded my life. O, that there were more faithful and loving hearts in this beautiful world of ours! Where truth and love dwell there is pure joy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH OF LITTLE KATY.

MRS. STEWART had been with us but a few months, when I received a letter from sister Jane, announcing the death of little Katy. Here is the letter:

"DEAR HENRI: I have sad news for Mrs. Stewart. "Little Katy is dead! The poor, dear thing always had "a sad look; but, after Mrs. Stewart left us, she seemed "sadder than ever. I tried to comfort the little mourner, "and cheer her drooping spirits; but all in vain. She "would nestle close to my heart, and seem to feel safe "there; but, at the same time, large tears would roll "down her pale cheeks. She never seemed like other "children; and how different she was from her brothers "and sisters! She always shrank from them, as if they "were her mortal enemies. Her father's presence "became so insupportable that she almost went into fits "when she heard him approaching. Day after day she "grew sadder and weaker; and she clung so closely to me "that I loved her as though she had been my own sister. "O, how affectionate she was! 'Can it be,' I thought,

" ' that she is the child of Deacon Webber? How unlike
" him,— how unlike the rest of the family!' I have
" since learned that Mrs. Webber was a kind-hearted and
" affectionate woman; but she had very little energy, and
" she stood in great fear of her husband. The education
" which her children received, the treatment of children
" who lived there, broke her heart; and, when death
" came, she welcomed it as a messenger of mercy,—only
" regretting that she must leave little Katy behind, to the
" tender mercies of her unfeeling father. Well might
" she regret,— well might she pray to live! But she felt
" that to live would be in vain; for Katy's mind and
" heart must be moulded by other hands than her own.
" Like her other children, she would only live to see her
" warm affections chilled, her gentle nature hardened.
" Must an *unregenerate* woman be left to guide the foot-
" steps of a child of one of the elect? No, no! fond
" mother, you would jeopardize your child's soul!

" When the deacon saw how pale and sickly little Katy
" looked, he blamed himself for having neglected her so
" long. ' Mrs. Stewart,' said he, ' has ruined the child,
" soul and body! She shall not be made a fool of any
" longer. She must have exercise, and good, strong,
" wholesome food. Salt pork, beef, cabbage, potatoes
" and coarse bread, will make her strong and well.' I
" was forced to stand and look on, and see him attempt
" to apply his remedies. Before sunrise in the morning

"he would make her leave her bed and take a long walk,
"even when the cold easterly winds chilled her through
"and through. At such times, she would return shaking
"with cold, her face wet with the burning tears of intense
"suffering; even then, she must not go to the fire, for
"it was not wholesome. The deacon threatened in vain;
"the tears would flow. At breakfast, he would try to
"force her to eat a hearty meal of detestable salt pork,
"fat beef, or something, if possible, equally repugnant to
"a sick child. With all the terror which he inspired,
"he could make her eat but little. In vain she tried to
"force it down; her poor, weak stomach would not receive
"it. After breakfast he would set her to sweeping, and
"the dust, with his tobacco-smoke, would bring on a
"violent fit of coughing. That, he said, was good for
"her, as it would start the phlegm from the lungs.

"After Mrs. Stewart left, she slept with me, until her
"father had taken her under his especial care; then he
"would not permit it, and for a time she slept alone.
"You will not be surprised to learn, that after all this
"had been done, she failed faster than ever. One morn-
"ing, she was unable to leave her bed, and I took her in
"my arms and carried her and laid her in my own. The
"deacon was incensed when he learned what I had done;
"but when he came into the room, she so screamed with
"affright, and clung with such tenacity to my neck, that
"he thought it best to leave her to my care, muttering, as

"he departed, that the child was ruined. I now had the "sole care of her; and so affectionate and so grateful was "the dear little thing, that I was as loth to leave her bed-"side as she was to have me. One evening she looked "at me very earnestly, and said,

"'Jane, I shall die before many days!'

"'I hope not,' I replied. 'But what makes you "think you shall die?'

"'Because I have been sick so long.' After a short "pause, she continued, 'I dreamed, just now, that I died, "and my body was put in the ground, but my soul went "to heaven; and I felt very happy, for I saw my mamma, "that you told me of last night!'

"'You must not think that you will die, because you "dreamed that you were dead. People often dream that "they are dead, and live many years after.'

"'Yes, but I shall not. I shall never be well again.'

"'Do you wish to die?'

"'Yes; if I can go to heaven, where dear mamma is.'

"'Do you wish to leave *me?*'

"'No, dear Jane!' she replied, placing her arms "around my neck, 'but father!' and she looked around "as though she feared he might be listening, 'I want to "die, and go away from him! O, I hope he won't come "to heaven!'

"'You should not hope so, Katy; for, if he goes to "heaven, he will be better than he is now.'

"'Is God in heaven, Jane?'

"'God is everywhere.'

"'And do you think he is good; and will he love "such a wicked child as I am, when I am dead?'

"'He loves all his creatures; and little children will "all be cared for by the Saviour. You are so good, that "the angels must love you! What makes you think that "you are wicked?'

"'Father says I am; and says, if I should die now, I "should go to a bad place and there I should have to stay "forever! But I am sure God will not send me there, "if he is good,— will he, Jane?'

"'No, dearest. Do not be afraid of God; for he is "good to all. If you die, angels will take you and carry "you to a happier world!'

"'What is an angel, Jane?'

"'Your mother is one, I trust. Angels are the spirits "of the departed.'

"'O, I hope mother will come after me! I shall be "so happy to go with her! I wish you and Mrs. Stewart "could go too, Jane!'

"I now told her that she must not talk any more; and "she soon fell asleep. The physician who was called "said her disease baffled his skill, and he was fearful that "his prescriptions would be in vain.

"Three days after, she died. When her father was "told that his child was dying, he hastened to my room;

"but she seemed fearful of him, even then. She "whispered to me,— 'I must go; mother is waiting for "me. Do not let him keep me! O, there are beautiful "beings there, and I shall not be sick any more, I shall "be so happy!'

"Her breath soon grew shorter, and ere long she was "dead, looking as though she had fallen into a quiet, "happy sleep. What a beautiful smile rested upon her "marble face! Dear, dear child, she is now in heaven! "I heard the deacon whisper to mother, as they turned "away from the bed of death, that he was sorry that she "had not given some evidence of the salvation of her soul; "he feared she was lost, for she had always been a "stubborn child!

"Lost! the dear angel! heaven has not a purer spirit! "What a creed is his, and what a heart he must "have to believe it! Heaven deliver me from such a "creed as that!

"It was a beautiful spring day when we laid her in the "silent grave, by the side of her mother. A willow "droops over the spot where she sleeps; the grass grows "green by her side, and the flowers are springing all "around her. Over her head the birds sing their sweetest "songs. Twice have I been to her little grave, and "bedewed it with my tears. But, thank God, she is "better off than to be here! She has now found her "mother. O, the joy of a clear and beautiful hope in a

"glorious immortality! 'There the wicked cease from "troubling, and the weary are at rest.'

"Our dear little Katy has bid us farewell,
"And gone home to heaven, where bright spirits dwell;
"Her mourning is over, and hushed all her sighs,
"On the wings of a seraph she soared to the skies.

"Thy life, little Katy, was saddened with grief,
"And tender affection could not bring relief;
"Thou hast found it in heaven, with angels so mild,—
"The soft, loving bosom now pillows its child.

"We weep not, dear Katy! though brief was thy stay,
"Thy Saviour has won thee, and called thee away;
"Thy mother enfolds thee, in love, as of yore,—
"Thy sorrows are ended, thy trials are o'er.

"O, darling! we miss thee, thou dear little dove,
"But sweet is thy memory, embalmed in our love;—
"Good-by, then, dear Katy, so blest in the skies,
"Enraptured in glory, with joy and surprise!

"Things remain very much the same here, excepting "that Hezekiah Webber is married, and moved on to his "father's place; for which we are very thankful, all but "the deacon, who did not like to part with his hopeful "son. I wish he had gone further off, for now he has "to call every day. Mother's health is failing quite fast. "I do not think she has many years to stay in this world. "The deacon is as ugly and repulsive as ever, but I will "not pain you with a recital of his brutal deeds.

"This letter would be unpardonably long, if it did not "contain matter of interest to you and Mrs. Stewart. "I have been particular in giving the little incidents, "because I knew that Mrs. Stewart would want to know "all. I would have sent for you both, but I did not "think it best. JANE."

When I read this letter to Mrs. Stewart, she wept very freely; but she felt reconciled, for Katy was free from her tormentor. She knew that the dear child was now in a brighter and better world.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEW SCENES AND NEW THOUGHTS.

It was now time that I should turn my attention to business; for I was twenty years old, and I had not yet fully determined what I had better do in order to gain an honest livelihood. I fancied that I should like to be a merchant; so, through the assistance of my uncle, I was engaged, in the capacity of a clerk, to a merchant by the name of Dinneford, in the city of New York. As his business was not large, he employed but two clerks. When the arrangements had all been made for my departure, I bade my friends a warm adieu, and started for my new home. I noticed that Helen was much affected when we parted; for, when she let go my hands, which she had held tightly in hers, she turned her head to hide the tears.

I arrived in New York in due season, and was kindly received by Mr. Dinneford. I was immediately introduced to a young man by the name of Ernest Brown, who had been some years in his employ. I found him to be an honest-hearted fellow, but reserved, and seemingly cold, and very bashful. In society his diffidence was a

sore annoyance to him, but it did not interfere with his duties in the shop. He would wait upon customers with as much grace and blandness of manner as the average run of clerks. I was soon after made acquainted with Mrs. Dinneford and two daughters, Agnes and Irene. Agnes was twenty-one, and Irene nineteen. The former looked like a good-hearted girl, but there was nothing very striking in her appearance. Not so with the latter; she was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. Her form, I thought, was perfect, and her face charming.

By a perfect form, I do not mean a waist like a wasp's, which fools and fops so much admire; and neither do I refer to *the* charming face, which generally accompanies the wasp waist, with features as tame and void of expression as a painted doll. Irene's form and face were such as God gave to women. She had a full chest and a generous waist, giving the lungs and other organs a chance to expand and grow strong and healthy. Irene's bust had that rounded fulness which gives one a little of the voluptuous look, and attracts the attention of every lover of the beautiful. Her face was more beautiful, if possible, than her form. A white, clear skin, dark, expressive eyes, red lips and slightly flushed cheeks. She had a high forehead, and hair of a dark brown,— of a soft, silky appearance. Sometimes her eyes wore a half-dreamy expression; but when aroused by any subject of interest, they glowed with a

brightness that was enchanting. I had thought Helen Means beautiful; but how much more so was Irene Dinneford! She took my hand cordially, and after a few commonplace words had passed between us, she turned away, and spoke to Mr. Brown. He seemed ill at ease in her presence, replying to her in monosyllables, interspersed with hems. She remained in the shop some time, busying herself in looking at the newest patterns, and asking Ernest various questions about the goods, to which he gave the shortest possible replies, in a rather awkward manner. Sometimes I caught him looking at her very earnestly, with much of soul in his naturally handsome eyes. But, as soon as his glance met hers, his eyes would drop, while she would continue to gaze, as though she wished that he would look at her once more with the same admiring glance. I felt that he was smitten as much as I was; but I questioned whether he would ever summon courage enough to tell her of his love, did he love never so well.

My time now passed rather pleasantly, although I was not so well pleased with the business as I expected to be. I supposed that I could sell goods to advantage, and please customers, without using deception or falsehood. But I found it an almost utter impossibility. Customers did not seem satisfied with the simple, honest truth. I had a great abhorrence of falsehood, from a child,— a liar I despised. Lying seemed so ineffably mean, that I

heartily despised him or her who was guilty of it. It was one of the many faults of the Webbers. Mr. Dinneford was as honest a trader as I had ever known. He was, at least, as honest as he could afford to be; and, the majority would say, a little more so. But even he felt obliged to use deception sometimes; and so did Ernest, who was naturally upright and conscientious. I was in the business but one year; and I now feel, as I look back to that period, that I often violated my principles. The business soon became distasteful to me, because it was so difficult to be strictly honest and truthful. Purchasers were accustomed to tell so many falsehoods, and use so much deception, that we sometimes became vexed, and turned their own weapons against themselves. The worst class to trade with are the Irish; and they are enough to irritate a saint. From what experience I had with them, I should judge they thought it perfectly right to lie, when making a trade; and as they do it almost universally, they will not believe a word the seller says. You might as well talk to the wind as to an Irishman, — and the women are worse than the men. But the fault is not all on the side of the buyers, for it is not an *unusual* thing for traders to lie and deceive. Merchants everywhere should adopt the one-price system, and adhere to it. This is a reform that is greatly demanded; for it would save the telling of a million of lies a day, even in our own country. Let a convention of merchants be

called, and the subject discussed in all its bearings, and then they will see the importance of adopting at once the one-price system. There was a class of purchasers who would not believe the simple truth, but the most ridiculous and improbable stories were readily swallowed. I was thankful that all were not of this caste. Many were intelligent and honest, and seemed to know as by instinct when the truth was told. There was another class who would not believe a word you said,— and I do not now refer to the Irish. All remonstrance with them was in vain. Such persons were not usually very well informed, or remarkably cunning; but they fancied they were. They were very conceited, self-confident, exceedingly selfish, without principle or a love of justice; and they believed that everybody would lie when they could gain anything by it, because that was the rule by which they were governed themselves.

I had not been many months in the business before I relinquished the long-cherished idea of being a merchant. I had bargained with Mr. Dinneford for one year; — I resolved that I would remain with him during that period, and then quit the mercantile business forever, unless I could continue it without being troubled with the stings of conscience.

New York was a good school for me; for I learned a thousand things, which I had not dreamed of in the country. I learned of its riches and its poverty; of its

overgrown wealth and its squalid wretchedness; of its virtues and its vices. I saw its fine churches and costly temples; but beneath their very shadows were starvation and crime. I learned that many were driven, from absolute want, to a life of infamy; and even their infamy was made a source of profit to the rich and bloated church. I do not include all churches and religious societies in this condemnation; but there are, even now, in the middle of this boasted nineteenth century, societies which obtain a part of their vast income by renting buildings for the vilest purposes.

I had previously thought a city a very fine place. But, alas! when I had an opportunity to witness its wretchedness, crime and injustice, I sighed for the country again,—the country, with its green fields and running brooks and rivers, its flowers and groves, the melody of birds and pure air! More beautiful to me were the hills and valleys around my country home than the parks and batteries in the city. I felt very miserable, when I wandered through some of the streets, and found nothing but poverty, wretchedness and crime. Filth, intemperance, and all other vices, seemed to have a habitation in every house. The inmates were steeped in corruption and wickedness; and little children, who have naturally so much love for the pure, the innocent and the beautiful, seemed at home in the midst of all this filth and beastliness. What coarse and bloated faces

looked out of the doors and windows! How old and strange were the faces of the little children! What an effect did all this abandoned wickedness produce upon the very buildings in which the poor wretches lived! How dingy and filthy they looked,— prematurely old, and fast going to decay. Crime, poverty, filth, debauchery, starvation and death, seemed to stare at you from every window, and to breathe out darkness, horror and disease, from every hole and crevice. How awful it is to see male and female, black and white, old and young, all living together in the same dark cellar, and all reeking with the vilest corruption! From such plague-spots, from these vice-altars, arises the foul incense of death, like the smoke of the bottomless pit, for ever and ever!

O! could we realize how many diseases have their origin in such places,—diseases which carry desolation to thousands of hearts, whether rich or poor,— we should not cease to cry out, in agony, until a remedy was found. The church would awake from its slumber of death, and seek to save men here — deliver them from the lowest hell! What a stigma upon Christianity and civilization, that such a place should exist under the very droppings of the sanctuary,— that children should be educated for the penitentiary and the gibbet. And yet thousands are thus educated, every year. They grow up, hating God and hating man; without love, purity or hope. Inured to crime, suffering, hunger and poverty, every heart shut

against them, every ear deaf to their cries, every eye turned from them with loathing and disgust,— is it any wonder that, Ishmael-like, their hands are raised against every man? Who teaches them love and truth? Who sheds the tear of sympathy over their woes and wrongs? Who gives them kind looks, or kind words? Alas! they read only scorn and contempt, hatred and loathing, in the eyes of those they meet by the way! They feel that the Christian and the man of God wish they were dead, as vile as they are. Why marvel that their hearts are hard, — that hatred and revenge mingle with all the red blood that courses through their veins? From infancy till death, all their finer feelings, their nobler aspirations, their better emotions, when they would gush forth, are met with such a freezing reception, that they are sent, trembling and cold, back upon the heart! God pity them, for the world despises and mocks! Surely there must be a great wrong somewhere, or these things would not be. Can society be right, when such things exist? — the vice, the crime, the corruption continually increasing! Is not a radical change in society called for? If not, where is the antidote?

I learned, too, the fearful inequality which exists in this republican land! Near the rich man's palace was the dwelling of the poor,— the former groaning with luxury, the latter pinched with hungry want. One suffering with the superabundance of the good things of

earth; the other suffering for the want of them. The inmates of the palace often leading a weary life for the want of something to do; the inmates of damp cellars, close rooms and cold attics, pining for rest. One party is too genteel to work; the other must work or die — work day and night.

That pale, hollow-eyed, sunken-cheeked woman, sitting sewing so late, night after night, by a dim light, must earn the bread for herself and three children. She has once seen better days; but her husband is dead, and now she makes shirts for six cents apiece! At one o'clock, stiff and cold, she will blow out her dim light and lie down with her children. Every night it is so. Alas! she will soon lie down in the grave! And then, her children! We will not pursue the painful subject.

In New York one sees society in all its various aspects; and the more he sees, and the more he reflects and studies, the more he is convinced that society, in its present state, is wrong. It is built on a wrong foundation, and it must be overturned and made new. The rights of the laborer must be looked to,— the antagonisms done away with. Now the jarring discord is ever heard, almost drowning, with its terrible noise and confusion, all the sweeter harmonies of the universe. The battle ever rages; the conflict still goes on. The multitude rush on in eager haste, all seeking to grasp the glittering prize;

not stopping to heed the cries and groans of the weak and powerless, who are trodden under their feet.

The reader will pardon me for these prolonged reflections, because of their importance. Let him not pass them idly by, but give them earnest thought, and then he may lend a hand to hasten on the "good time coming."

CHAPTER XV.

A MEDLEY.

I MET frequently with Irene Dinneford, both at her home and at the store. I spent many of my evenings with her. Sometimes we went to the theatre, the opera, or to a concert, or evening lecture. I found her very intelligent and interesting. We discussed the merits of plays, actors and books. She was well versed in history, poetry and romance. Of all the poets, she liked Byron best. I preferred Shelley and Shakspeare. She was enraptured with the grandeur of Milton, the beauty of Thomson, the affection of Burns and the melody of Moore. I also admired them, but my feelings were not so intense as hers. Our tastes were similar in relation to literature, music and painting. She had a passionate love for the drama, but regretted that actors did not more respect themselves. "If they would be temperate and virtuous," she thought, "the strong prejudice against them would gradually wear away." She was right; for it is lamentable they should so often degrade themselves, and create injurious prejudice.

People sometimes express their surprise that play-

actors should be so poor; but it is not any marvel, when they are continually visiting hotels and grog-shops, drinking, carousing, day after day. It is not because they receive so little, but they spend so much foolishly. It is folly to attempt to kill the drama, or do away with theatres. People will have amusements; and the drama should be made, not only a source of amusement, but of instruction and improvement. Improper language, such as is unfit and would corrupt the social circle, should not be uttered upon the stage. True wit is not coarse or vulgar. Words of vile import, indecent hints, etc., may please the low and depraved, but the more refined and virtuous will turn away in disgust. In this respect a reform is loudly called for, and stage-managers will do well to heed it.

Our favorite actor was the elder Booth, who has within a brief period "shuffled off this mortal coil." He was then in his prime; and very seldom, if ever, has he been excelled in his ability to delineate character. It mattered not that his face and form were not in accordance with your ideas of the character he personated, for you soon forgot all about them; you forgot Booth, for you saw only Hamlet. So of Richard the Third, the hunch-back king and assassin,—he was "himself again." That plotting devil, Iago, walked the stage of life once more; and old, garrulous, demented King Lear made you sad when you looked into his sorrow-stricken face, and heard him pour

forth, in broken words, the griefs of his heart. Poor Booth! what a checkered life was thine! "Peace to thy ashes!"

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well."

"Thou knowest it is common, all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity."

"Close up his eyes, and draw the curtain close,
And let us all to meditation."

Our tastes being so similar, it was no marvel that we should seek each other's society, and feel happy when we were together; but still there was ever something lacking. There was not that freedom and ease that I could have wished. Something stood between us, to keep us apart. Half ravished with her beautiful form and face, her soul-lit eyes, charmed with her conversation, I sometimes thought of asking her to become mine. But her manner was never sufficiently cordial to give me the required assurance that I should not meet with a repulse. And ever, when I thought of offering myself in marriage to her, I would think of Helen,— of the rescue, the happy hours I had spent in her presence, our pleasant rambles, gathering flowers, chasing butterflies, reading out of the same book, while sitting under a green, shady tree. How many hours has she read to me, in her clear, sweet tones! And then I was happy.

"O ! sweet as the lapse of water at noon
O'er the mossy roots of some forest tree,
The sigh of the wind in the woods of June,
Or sound of flutes o'er a moonlight sea,
Or the low, soft music, perchance, which seems
To float through the slumbering singer's dreams, —

"So sweet, so dear is the silvery tone
Of her in whose features I sometimes look,
As I sit at eve by her side alone,
And we read by turns from the self-same book —
Some tale perhaps of the olden time,
Some lover's romance, or quaint old rhyme.

"Then, when the story is one of woe,
Some prisoner's plaint through his dungeon bar,
Her blue eye glistens with tears, and low
Her voice sinks down like a moan afar ;
And I seem to hear the prisoner's wail,
And his face looks on me, worn and pale.

"And when she reads some merrier song,
Her voice is glad as an April bird's ;
And when the tale is of war and wrong,
A trumpet's summons is in her words,
And the rush of the hosts I seem to hear,
And see the tossing of plume and spear ! " *

Irene Dinneford was good, intelligent and accomplished, and more beautiful than Helen ; but then, I ever shrank from doing what would separate me forever from the one who had been so long a dear companion and

* Whittier.

faithful friend. I did not love Helen, and I knew not what were her feelings in reference to me; but I felt that the relation of brother and sister would not do for us. A nearer tie must bind us, or our dear friendship must be broken. We might remain friendly in a certain sense, — visit each other, and ever be affable and courteous; but that joy which was mutual — that blending of soul, heart, and life — could be ours no more. Hitherto, each had shared the other's joys and sorrows, hopes and fears; but now I felt that the links of the golden chain which encircled us were broken, and my hand had done it. Henceforth, there was a breach between us. The thought made me sorrowful. But I did not attempt to retrace my steps. Helen wrote to me often, and her letters ever breathed sweet sisterly affection. She was anxious to see me, and said that her dear home was lonely without me. I occasionally heard from the home that was once mine, but not often. It is useless to remark that it was the same dreary, unhappy place. Beautiful was the scenery all around it, but within that large, elegant house, embowered in trees, was dreariness and decay. Without, the birds sang in the trees, and the summer winds whispered sweetest music. Flowers lifted their heads and held up their bright faces, blushing as they received the warm kisses of the zephyrs and sunbeams. Within was harsh discord, ever-darkening shad-

ows, and no sun-light. How like man, smiling when his heart is full of bitterness!

"For smiles will linger on the face,
Long after they have left the heart."

Ernest became still more reserved, and in vain I tried to read his feelings. I could not understand him. He was never rude, and yet I was always repulsed when I would have been his friend. This lack of cordiality on his part did not cause me to dislike him. I felt that he was true at heart; and I respected him, in spite of his coldness. I thought there must be a good and sufficient reason for his want of cordiality.

I sometimes met him at Mr. Dinneford's. His appearance there was less pleasing than elsewhere,— more awkward and reserved. He seemed anxious to join in the conversation, and yet lacked the power. When Irene sang, accompanied by the piano, which she played most beautifully, Ernest gazed enraptured, and his whole soul seemed to look out of his dark eyes, and settle in intense admiration upon her. When she caught his glance, there was a wild light in her eyes, which glowed full upon him, causing him to shrink back within himself. That noble, inspiring look, which had for a moment lighted up his countenance, vanished, like the meteor's flash in an evening sky. I sometimes thought that Irene must be more than half a coquette.

He would generally retire early, leaving me *tête-à-tête* with Irene, which was just what I desired. She would occasionally ask my opinion of Ernest; but not often, for I had nothing new to tell her. I told her that he was different from most other young men; and that I could know but little of him, for I had failed to gain his confidence. Her opinion coincided with mine. She wished he was more frank, and less reserved,— would be glad to be better acquainted with him. I thought she was quite interested; but then, as she was a girl of fine feelings and large sympathies, I very naturally supposed that, as he appeared gloomy and unhappy, she was anxious to disperse the clouds, and let the bright sunlight shine resplendent upon him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BETROTHAL.

ONE cool and bright morning in October, as I was crossing Broadway, I noticed a commotion down the street; I looked to discover the cause, and saw a horse attached to a buggy chaise running at full speed. As the carriage came nearer, I saw it contained only a female; and knowing that it must inevitably come in contact with a large wagon just beyond me, I resolved to attempt to save her, at all hazards. When the horse was nearly opposite, I sprang and caught him by the bit, and succeeded in bringing him to, barely in season to save the carriage from being dashed to pieces, and its inmate, most probably, from serious injury. In doing this, I was not a little bruised; for I was taken from my feet, and dragged some rods. Still, my injuries were not of a very serious nature.

How great was my surprise, when I arose to my feet, to find that the young lady in the carriage was Irene Dinneford! She looked pale and much frightened; but a bright flush sprang to her cheeks, and her eyes lighted up

with an unwonted brilliancy, when she saw who was her preserver. She sprang from the carriage and warmly grasped my hand, thanking me, not in words, but in looks, a thousand times. She said, "Henri, you must go home with me." I readily assented, and we got into a hack and were quickly driven to Mr. Dinneford's. She informed me, on the way, that she had rode out with her father; that he left the horse for a moment, to deliver a letter intrusted to his care. Some water thrown from a window near by, just at that moment, frightened the horse. She had the presence of mind to grasp the reins, and was enabled, it being early in the morning, when comparatively few carriages were stirring, to keep clear of them. She saw, as she approached the large wagon, that to pass it without coming in contact was almost impossible; and she felt that she had not long to live.

Soon after we had arrived at her home, Mr. Dinneford came in, all out of breath, and looking as pale as death. When he found that his darling Irene was safe, he was overjoyed, and the pearly tears glistened in his eyes. I had the satisfaction of receiving the congratulations of the whole family, and among the happy I was the happiest. On account of my bruises, they said I must remain where I was for the present. Although I was not much hurt, I willingly consented to remain. Where else could I be so happy as in the company of Irene Dinneford?

The day passed away pleasantly, and I never felt better satisfied with myself and all around me. Irene and I were, for the most of the time, alone. She seemed nearer and dearer to me than ever; that something which had stood between us, like a cloud between the sun and the earth, had departed,—the spectre had vanished, leaving but a slight shadow behind, even as the shadows of night still linger after the morning has dawned. Irene looked radiantly happy, and sat by my side, with one hand clasped in mine, her passionate eyes fixed earnestly upon me, as though they would say, "Our happiness is now complete!" The window where we sat commanded a full view of the western sky, in which reposed vast piles of fleecy clouds, in an atmosphere of gold. The sun was just descending, and ever and anon it hid its face behind a white cloud, making it to look red and bright, like the fiery eyes behind it. Then again the cloud was removed, and a flood of glory swept through the world, like the breath of the storm-god over the great waters. In the distance, the landscape smiled like a radiant bride, the face of the waters brightened, and the domes and spires of the city gleamed with golden light. Again its face was hid, and now those mountains of snowy clouds shone with fiery grandeur and beauty, as though vast flames were glowing in their bosoms. Soon the day-king had descended to his bed, and the curtains of his golden couch were drawn closely around him, and we saw his face no more. Now

shadows rested upon the landscape, played upon the face of the waters, and came in troops into the streets and lanes of the city.

I turned to Irene; tears trickled down her cheeks, and I asked her why she wept — if she was unhappy.

"It was too much for me," she replied. "O! what a beautiful sunset! Nay, radiantly glorious! Is heaven, think you, more beautiful?"

"I know not," I replied; "but there, we trust, no jarring discords can come between us and such celestial harmonies."

"True, true. But do not mar our present joy by inviting them hither now."

"I will not, dearest. But, lest they should come, you must sing, and then they will seek to enter in vain."

She arose, and opened the piano, and sang, in clear, sweet tones, Burns' "Sweet Afton." I had never heard it before, and the words fell upon my ears like the sweet breathings of flute-like music, when they steal on harmony's soft wings across a quiet stream. She then sang a livelier song, which I have frequently heard since, but oftener murdered than sung. I was charmed with the singing of a part of the chorus. Here are the words:

"Dearest for thee, thee only,
These mountain wilds are sweet to me;
Each crag and valley lonely
Are blessed because 't is loved by thee."

She then played a wild, touching air, in which were mingled strains of thrilling sweetness, soft as the whispered music of zephyrs when playing among the petals of roses.

She now closed the piano, and came and sat down by my side. It was still light, and I could see that her face was radiant and happy.

"Henri," she said, earnestly, "how shall I ever cancel the debt I owe you?"

"What debt, Irene?"

"When in the greatest peril, you delivered me, and, I believe, saved my life, at the risk of your own. I know not how to pay such a debt as that."

"I did not know it was you, Irene; so you are not particularly in debt."

"That does not alter the case. I must insist upon it that I owe a debt which I can never pay."

"Since you insist upon it, I will tell you how it may be cancelled."

"Do so," she said, quickly, "and it shall be done. What shall it be, Henri?"

I put my arms around her neck, and drew her towards me. "Give me the right to call you mine, only mine," I said, passionately. She leaned her head upon my bosom, and I folded her to my heart.

"You are mine, mine only," I whispered.

"Yes, dearest," she said, and mutual kisses sealed the

contract. Our bliss was short, for she suddenly sprang from my arms, like a frightened fawn.

"What!" I cried, "do you repent so soon?"

"O! no, Henri; but, pardon me! My nature is so impetuous that I had forgotten what propriety required."

"I don't think so. These rules of propriety are like icebergs, decidedly chilling. Must the warmest and most generous feelings of the heart be all chained or crushed, whenever they would leap into life?"

"I would that mine might be chained, sometimes."

"I shall disagree with you. Would you bind the winds, and chain the lightning?"

"Yes, both, when they are likely to do mischief. Your simile pleases me, and I will seek to profit by it."

"Very well, but give me the assurance that you love me — that I shall have the right to call you my own Irene."

She gave me her hand, and whispered, "I am thine!" We were here interrupted by the ringing of the tea-bell, and our blissful *tête-à-tête* was ended.

That night I had a strange dream, leaving an impression which I could not shake off. I thought that a spirit came and stood by my bed, and gazed upon me with a mild, reproving look. Its face resembled Helen Means'. It did not speak, and yet I felt that I must go with it. I hastily arose, and was surprised to find how quickly I had recovered from my injuries. In a brief period I was at

my boyhood's home. Once more the humid hills and valleys and green woodlands were smiling and rejoicing all around me. The flowers were again blushing, as they frolicked with the zephyrs; and the butterflies were dancing gayly through the soft and balmy atmosphere, as though a world of happiness filled their little hearts. Once more I stood by that dark stream of water, and saw the golden-tinted fish. Then I was startled by a loud cry of distress; and I hastened, with my usual impetuosity, to deliver a little girl from the brutal hands into which she had fallen. The child was poor and pale, and her clothing ragged and dirty. "I know you," thought I; "you are Helen Means."

In a moment, as it were, the scene had changed. I was walking in a dark and unknown wood; the rain was beating down in torrents, and the wind was shaking the tall forest trees in great wrath, and howling, and moaning, and shrieking, as though the woods were filled with the ghosts of the damned. The spirit was still with me. It led me to a large tree, and beneath it reposed, in soft sleep, although the storm was beating upon it, a little child. A sweet smile played upon its pale face; and, as I gazed in wonder upon so strange a sight, I thought, "And you, too, are Helen Means."

Again the scene had changed, and I was in the dearest spot to me on earth, for there had I spent my happiest days. It seemed a calm, star-light night, cool but beau-

tiful. I could hear the soft, liquid notes of a laughing stream, whose meandering course I had often followed, while by my side had walked or ran a gentle being,—a happy, blue-eyed girl, pure and truthful as an angel. In the distance, on yonder hill-side, the limbs of the trees were waving in the night-breeze, as if they welcomed me home again. I gazed with silent and breathless joy upon the calm scene around me. I was alone, but in a moment the spirit was again at my side. I knew that I must follow it. Close to us was the house of my uncle; we entered the front door and walked up the stairs, and my guide led me to the bedside of a beautiful girl, who seemed to be in a troubled sleep. The spirit gazed upon her steadfastly, with eyes of love; and then turned to me and said, though not a sound escaped its lips, "Her dreams are sad; thou mayst know their import." I now read her thoughts as plainly as I ever read in a book. She was dreaming of me — that I had forgotten her, and given my heart to another. Pearly tears started from their invisible founts, and slowly rolled down her pale cheeks. She awoke and murmured, "Cruel, cruel Henri!" I was immeasurably distressed, and was about to speak, when I awoke. Just as I opened my eyes, I fancied I heard her say, "Thank heaven, it is all a dream!" I could with difficulty persuade myself that I had not heard her voice. The words seemed to have been spoken in my room. I, too, was glad to find it all a dream. I was in a deep

perspiration, and my cheeks were wet with my tears. "Strange," thought I, "that a dream should affect me thus!" I did not sleep again, for my thoughts were so troubled that I could not. I courted the sleepy god in vain. I succeeded, at last, in driving away the thoughts that oppressed me, by the consideration, which I eagerly sought to impress upon my mind, that I had but passed through a troubled dream, caused, perhaps, by the previous day's excitement, and the injuries from which I was suffering.

I arose and dressed myself with difficulty, for my limbs were stiff and sore, and there was a severe pain in my side. When the family saw my haggard appearance, they expressed much solicitude, and were fearful that my injuries were more severe than I had supposed them to be. I told them that I had not rested well, but there were no alarming symptoms. I read so much pure sympathy and concern in the sweet face of Irene, that the effects of my dream soon departed, and my spirits were again buoyant and happy. By the application of such remedies as were requisite, I was soon relieved from all my unpleasant symptoms. I felt that I should recover, for I had an angel for a nurse.

In the afternoon Ernest came to see me. His countenance looked more dejected than ever. He expressed a desire that Irene should sing. She complied, and sang,

"O, give me a cot in the valley I love,
A tent in the green-wood, a home in the grove."

And, at my request,

"I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls."

Ernest stood and gazed upon her with that same enraptured expression which, more than once before, I had seen light up and make beautiful a usually tame and inexpressive countenance. Irene caught his glance, and a troubled look came over her, and just then I was a bit jealous. But it soon passed away, for I fancied she might be thinking of his joyless life.

The next day I wrote to my uncle, informing him of my engagement to Irene Dinneford, and the circumstances attending it, craving his blessing,—also my aunt's, Mrs. Stewart's and Helen's. A pang shot through my heart, as I wrote the dear name of Helen, and my strange dream was again vividly before me. But I finished my letter, and, with a heart half sad, half joyous, delivered it into the hands of a servant, to be taken to the office.

In a few days I had returned to the store, having, in the mean time, entirely altered my plans for the future. Mr. Dinneford had offered me a partnership in his business, which I had agreed to accept. The first day of January was fixed as the time when I should commence business; till then I was to remain a clerk, as I

had been. On that day I was to lead Irene to the altar. When Ernest learned of this arrangement, he signified his wish to close his services as clerk immediately; but Mr. Dinneford would not consent until his time expired, the last day of December. In due season a letter arrived from my uncle. It was brief, and, I thought, cold. It commenced by expressing surprise that they were to lose me so soon,— hoped I might be *very* happy, and that they should have the pleasure, ere long, of seeing me and my affianced bride. Helen's name was not mentioned, and I felt a little piqued.

The days and weeks now passed away swiftly and pleasantly, for they floated on the rosy wings of love. Irene and I were much together, and we felt that to be near each other was happiness. Not that our bliss was unalloyed, for there were moments when neither seemed at ease. I knew not what were the thoughts that made her unhappy, but I well knew my own. That mysterious dream often troubled me, and the thought that Helen was lost to me forever made me at times wretched. A long time had passed, and she had not answered my last letter. My uncle had written that she was indisposed, and unable to write. I thought of going to her, that I might comfort her in her hour of sorrow; but something held me back. A few months before, and I should have flown on the swift wings of love.

It pained me not a little to realize that the nearer the

day approached for our marriage, the less there was of mutual love and sympathy between us. Instead of that oneness of feeling and sentiment, that melting and mingling of two beings into one, which is so requisite to secure happiness in married life, there was a mutual shrinking away, as though we dreaded the hour when the law should declare us husband and wife. The old shadow had returned, and stood, with a stern glance, to frighten us back, like the lions in the path of the pilgrim, whenever we would approach the goal of happiness. I was often thinking of Helen, and Irene was thinking of — I knew not what. She once expressed to me her fears that we should never be happy. I asked her why she thought so. She said she did not know, but she could not drive the troubling thought from her heart. I threw my arms around her, and, as her head rested upon my bosom, I whispered, "All will yet be well," — though I but half felt it.

We do not always know the import of our own words. The seer tells of things which are yet to come to pass, but does not understand them. He is often a medium of truth to the world, the importance of which he has no conception.

CHAPTER XVII.

A WALK IN THE PARK.— EAVES-DROPPING.

It was the second week in December, and the nuptial day was rapidly approaching. One evening, just as the sun had set, I called at Mr. Dinneford's. It was warm, like summer, and not a flake of snow had yet fallen. I inquired for Irene, and was told that a cousin had arrived from the country that afternoon, and that she, Mr. Dinneford and Irene, had gone to a walk in the Park. I walked leisurely there, and soon encountered Mr. Dinneford, who was alone. I asked for the girls, and he pointed them out, some distance off, walking very slowly, as though engaged in deep conversation.

"I let them stray," said Mr. Dinneford, "for they are old cronies, and I was well aware, by their actions, that they had a number of young girls' *secrets* to disclose to each other. And now, as you have come, I shall take myself off, being of no further use."

I did not immediately follow them, but let them continue their conversation, until it had become dark. As I approached them, they took a seat, without noticing me, so much were they engrossed with the subject that

engaged their attention. I thought I would step up behind them, and give them a sudden start. When I was nearly to them, I heard her cousin say,

"And so you are engaged to marry, and yet you are fearful that you do not love him."

"I know that I do not love him as he deserves to be loved, or as his nature requires," was the answer.

I was now deeply interested, and I could not resist the temptation to hear more.

"And shall you marry him, if you cannot love him?"

"I suppose I must, now, it has gone so far."

"But you must not do anything of the kind. What right have you to go to the altar, if you do not love?"

"I sometimes feel it to be wrong; but I highly respect him, and almost love him; and our minister says that respect is, on the whole, better than love, for there is something to found love upon after marriage."

"Your minister is a fool! I have no patience with many of the clergy of the present day; they don't seem to be more than half human."

"Why, how you talk of the clergy! Mother would think you a heathen, to hear you."

"What I say is true, nevertheless. Tell about respect being better than love! What constitutes marriage but mutual love?"

"I feel that you are right; but I will marry Henri, and I shall love him, he is so noble and generous."

"Why do you think you shall love him after marriage, if you cannot before?"

"Because I almost love him now; and sometimes I have felt that I love him with my whole heart. O! how often have I prayed that it might be so always!"

"And yet your prayer is not answered. Irene, it is not right that it should be. Your love for him is that of a sister for a dear brother, rather than a husband."

"I am fearful that it is so, but I hope not. After we are married, I shall feel that we must be all in all to each other; and he is so good, I doubt not I shall love him dearly."

"Irene, the girl who gives her hand to a man she does not love, perils her own happiness and the happiness of her husband, and commits a great wrong. You will not marry Henri!"

"Do not say that, Mary. Henri saved me in the hour of peril, and I have promised to marry him. My parents have given their consent and their blessing. The day is rapidly approaching. It is too late now."

"No, it is not too late,— you are not yet married. There is yet time, if you only act as a woman should."

"But can I do him so great a wrong, when he has done so much for me? And what would my parents say?"

"The greatest wrong you can do Mr. Eaton is to

marry him, when you cannot give him your whole heart."

"O, but he shall never know it. It is too late to think of breaking our engagement now. I will marry him!"

"Irene, be candid with me. Is there not some other being in the world whom you love more?"

"I do not know, Mary."

"You do not know! But you *do* know, and you cannot hide the truth from your own heart. Tell me who it is, and why you are separated."

"You are a strange girl, Mary, and seem determined to bring all my hidden thoughts to light. To tell the truth, there is one whom I have often fancied that I could love, if he would love me; and I thought so before I ever saw Henri."

"I guessed as much. Who is the gentleman?"

"The bashful clerk to whom I introduced you, when you were here last."

"I cannot say that I admire your taste. I should prefer Mr. Eaton; but we do not all think alike. But does he know anything,— is he intelligent? He appeared to me very dull and stupid, and entirely devoid of language, excepting no and yes, and frequent hems."

"He is very diffident, and often stupid; but I know he has a soul true and noble. One who lacks intelligence and goodness could not look as I have seen him. I have seen his countenance lit up, as it were, by inspiration;

and O, how noble it looked! And his eyes — how full of passion they were, and how entrancing was their expression!"

"I think he would feel flattered to hear you now. I see plainly enough that you love him. But have you any evidence that this feeling is mutual?"

"I have thought so, when his eyes were fixed upon me so passionately, and seemingly so full of admiration; and, besides, he is so much more sorrowful since he learned my engagement with Henri."

"Irene, you shall marry Ernest, and not Henri!"

"O, no! it may not be. I do not know that I should like Ernest at all, if better acquainted. In three weeks I shall be married, and then Ernest will be nothing to me. But you must never mention this to a single soul."

"No, dear, I will not. You know that you can trust me; but do you think Mr. Eaton would marry you, if he knew what your feelings are?"

"I do not believe he would. I sometimes think that he does not love me. He is very different, at times,"

"Another reason why you should not marry. It must not be, Irene."

"I have told you that it is too late to retreat. I know what my father would say. I never had a cross look or an angry word from him in my life, and I could not bear them now."

By this time I had heard enough, and I walked softly away, and went quite a distance from them, and came up in a different direction, that they might not mistrust that I had heard their conversation.

And does the reader ask what were my thoughts and emotions, while I listened to this revelation? They were peculiar, as might well be supposed. At first, I was not a little mortified. It was not very pleasing to learn that another was preferred to me, when our wedding-day was so near at hand. For a few minutes the green-eyed monster had such power over me, that I trembled with emotion. I soon got the mastery of this unmanly feeling, for I knew that to give way to it was foolish and wrong; and then my thoughts were not at all painful. In fact, a burden seemed to be removed and a weight taken from my heart. In a brief period I had formed my plan of action; and I walked rapidly to where they sat, apprizing them of my approach by a loud hem. They seemed a little embarrassed when they saw me, but my manner quickly reässured them. Irene introduced me to Mary Dinneford, her cousin, from New Jersey. I had seen her before, but had not received an introduction.

I told them that I had met Mr. Dinneford, and he had commissioned me to attend them home. They arose, and I offered an arm to each, and we walked leisurely homeward. The evening was spent in agreeable conversation. When the clock had struck ten, I signified to Irene

that I wished a private interview. She looked surprised, as it was the first evening of her cousin's visit, and we had spent the previous evening together. Probably they intended to have had a confidential conversation, after they retired.

"Will it be long?" she inquired, hesitatingly.

"Most likely," I replied. "But why do you ask?"

"Excuse me," she answered. "I asked because it interfered with a previous arrangement. But I will make it all right."

She crossed the room to her cousin, and they continued to whisper together for some time. During their conversation her parents withdrew. Soon after, Agnes followed, accompanied by Mary. We were now alone. I confess I never felt so much embarrassed before, and Irene seemed as much so as I was. I asked her to sing. She complied, and sang a beautiful air, with words which, I thought, very appropriate for the occasion. She now took a seat by my side on the sofa, where we had spent many happy hours. I took her hand, and informed her that I had a long story to tell her, with which I thought she would be interested. She looked a good deal puzzled, and I commenced. My story was of Helen Means and myself. I gave her an account of our first acquaintance, the measures I took to get her out of Deacon Webber's hands, her dressing in boys' clothes, sleeping in the woods, and, finally, being found by my uncle and carried to his

home. I also gave an account of her sickness, and my subsequent removal to my uncle's; the happy days we had spent together; and I closed with my strange dream. In giving this history, I dwelt much upon the merits of Helen,— her loving and forgiving spirit, her tender and truthful heart.

She listened with deep attention; and when I had finished my narrative, she remarked that it was an interesting and touching story.

"But why," she asked, "have you chosen this hour to tell it to me?"

"Can you not surmise the reason?"

She looked at me inquiringly, but did not speak.

"Irene," I said, "I will be candid with you. I am afraid that I love Helen better than I do you."

"I now understand you."

"Well?"

"You wish the engagement between us should close."

"Would it not be best?"

"Certainly, if you do not love me."

"Is it not in accordance with your wishes?"

"I should not wish to marry you, if you loved another."

"No, but would you wish to marry me, if I loved you only?"

"Yes."

"Be candid, Irene. Is it the sincere desire of your heart,— your whole heart?"

"Henri, why do you ask such questions?"

"Because I have often noticed, that when we were together, and should have been happy, your thoughts were elsewhere."

"The same thing I have noticed in you."

"I was thinking of Helen Means."

"Yes."

"And where were your thoughts, Irene?"

She was silent.

"Irene, I have been guilty of a breach of etiquette, which, I fear, you will not pardon."

"I can tell better when I know what it is."

"Certainly."

"Will you inform me? Nothing very bad, I hope."

"You shall know. I listened to your conversation, to-night, in the Park."

She sprang to her feet, and her eyes flashed.

"Is it possible, Henri? I would not have believed you capable of it!"

"Sit down," I said, "and hear my justification."

She mechanically obeyed.

"As I approached you, I heard your cousin say, 'And yet you are fearful that you do not love him?' Do you wonder that I stopped to hear the reply?"

"No."

"You are aware what followed. I despise an eaves-dropper as heartily as you can. But, had you been in my place, would you have acted differently?"

"I think not."

"Then I am forgiven."

"You are."

"Thank you. Now let us come to an understanding. The feeling must be mutual, that our engagement shall be broken off."

She nodded assent.

"Irene," I continued, somewhat affected, "you will yet be happy. I believe that Ernest loves you."

She seemed to awake suddenly from a painful revery.

"O, do not tell him what you heard me say! I beg of you, Henri!"

"I will do as you wish," I replied.

"Now tell me," said she, looking at me earnestly; "is not Helen Means a creature of the imagination?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I have never heard you speak of her before; and I have thought, now that I am aware you heard our conversation to-night, that you might have invented this Helen, to show that our intended marriage was as distasteful to you as to me."

"You are mistaken,— I have told you but the truth."

"I am very thankful that it is so. But, O! how sad

I feel! As I know that you are never to be my husband, a sense of dreary loneliness steals over me."

"I, too, feel sadly; but the shadows will not remain long,— the morning sun will chase them away."

"What will my poor father say? It will almost break his heart."

"Leave it to me. I know it will be a serious disappointment to him; but it will come out right in the end."

"I fear his displeasure."

"You need not, if you will let me manage the whole affair. No blame shall fall on you."

"You are ever generous. But can I consent to let you suffer for me? No, no, Henri! You once perilled your own life to save mine; and, when I think of that noble act, I feel that I would marry you, did I love another with my whole heart!"

"There you are wrong. I simply did what you would do, if you had the opportunity."

"Perhaps so. But I will go to my father, this night, and tell him all!"

"That you must not do. Your father is, most likely, in a sound sleep now, and he would not thank you for waking him at this time of night to hear a romantic love-story. I shall insist upon taking the matter into my own hands."

"Do as you think best; for your will is stronger than

mine. O, Henri! you would have thought, by my words in the Park to-night, that this scene would have relieved me of a burden, and made my heart light; and so I thought, but it was never so sad before. My hopes have so long centred in you, that now I feel alone!"

"Do not indulge in such feelings. Think of Ernest!"

"O, do not mention him! He does not love me."

"I believe he does, and you will soon learn the fact. Hereafter, we shall be as brother and sister to each other."

"I cannot comprehend it."

"You will, ere long; so think of the happy days in store for you."

I arose to depart. She looked at me with earnest, tearful eyes, and then sprang into my arms, with all the impetuosity of her nature, and hung weeping upon my neck. My tears were mingled with hers. That last love embrace was long and painful, in which were mingled sighs, tears and kisses. It was with difficulty that we tore ourselves apart. All our old feelings seemed to have concentrated into that moment, with three-fold power. I now wonder that we did not pledge ourselves anew. Had either mentioned it, I doubt not we should have done so. It was well that we did not. I felt the danger we were in,— two such impulsive natures as ours,— and I

took my hat and hastily fled from the house, leaving Irene weeping upon the sofa.

After I had retired to my bed, I had time to collect my thoughts; and I felt that we had done right, and soon every vestige of regret had fled, and I fell into a calm and refreshing slumber.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ERNEST BROWN.

THE ensuing morning, when I went into the shop, I found Ernest looking pale and dejected. When I bade him good-morning, in a light and happy tone of voice, he regarded me for a moment with a glance of bitter hatred.

I fixed my eyes upon him with a searching look, desiring to read his heart. If it was capable of harboring a mean and contemptible spirit of hatred towards one who had never sought to injure him, I did not wish Irene to become his bride. He quailed beneath my glance, his eyes cast upon the floor, as if ashamed of himself. At last he spoke.

"Your thoughts, in relation to me, Mr. Eaton, are not very complimentary, just now."

"Very true."

"You are candid, and I like you all the better for it. I fear I have given you some reason to doubt the sincerity of my friendship; so I shall not complain."

"I am glad you are sensible of it, and have the courage and manliness to confess it. I think better of you now."

"Thank you, and I will try never to give you cause to think evil of me again."

"Why did you give me such a look of scorn and contempt, when I greeted you with such a whole-hearted good-morning?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Why not?"

"O, Henri! you can never know how intensely I suffer! For many months before you came to New York, I had a blissful waking dream, which *now* can never be realized!"

"Tell me the dream, for perchance I may interpret it."

"The dream, and the radiant hopes it inspired me with so long, are locked in my own heart; and there shall they sleep undisturbed forever!"

These words were spoken slowly, in a low but passionate tone; his countenance clearly indicating the wild tumult which raged within his breast. I knew that sleep was not there. Hence I said,

"Sleep — undisturbed —"

"No, no! I would to God they would sleep,— die! but they will not!"

"It is possible," I said, "that I may have the key which will unlock that heart, and bring the dream to the light of day, and the hopes it inspired you with."

"Do not taunt me," he said, fiercely, "or I may do what I shall be sorry for to the end of my life!"

I was somewhat nettled by his look, and the manner in which he uttered those words, and I answered,

"Most likely I shall say what I please; and violent threats will not deter me in the least."

"Beware how you speak, Mr. Eaton, or I shall make you repent in bitterness, though the curse of the act should follow me to my grave!"

"That would be very unwise, to say the least. You do not know me, Ernest, or you would not talk in that fashion. I fear you as I do the wind!"

"Do you defy me?"

"Just as you please."

He came fiercely towards me, but suddenly stopped and looked earnestly in my face.

"You are not a coward?" I said, half laughing. "'Lay on, Macduff.'"

His eyes flashed.

"I was about to do a foolish act," he said, "and if you believe me to be a coward —"

"Well, what would you do?"

"I know not."

"I do not believe it, Ernest. We are both fools."

"I did not know that we were so much alike, Henri. Give me your hand!"

I grasped it cordially.

"We are reconciled now," he remarked. "Let us be friends."

"Amen," I responded, earnestly.

"We *are* alike!" he said. "But I have suffered all my days, while you have lived happily. Dark clouds have ever lowered over my path, while your sky has been clear and beautiful, and your way smooth and pleasant."

"You are mistaken, Ernest. I too have suffered bitterly."

"Is it possible? But your prospects are bright now, your hopes golden, while I am in the lowest hell of despair!"

"Will you not confide your sorrows to me, as to a friend? I may have the power to alleviate them; I am sure I wish you well."

"I do not doubt it; but it is not in your power,—not in the power of man!"

He was now fast relapsing into his usual state of weary dulness. I was determined to arouse him; and after I had left him a sufficient time to commune with his own thoughts, having, in the mean time, entered some accounts on the leger, I returned to him, and remarked, carelessly,

"You are aware, Ernest, that I am to be married soon?"

"I am."

"Will you and Miss Dinneford act as groomsman and bridesmaid?"

"No."

"Why not?"

He hesitated.

"How do I know that it would be agreeable to Agnes?"

"Mary Dinneford is here. I think it would be agreeable to her, or Agnes either."

"But it would not to me."

"Will you give me your reason?"

"No."

"Your answer is to the point, but cold and bitter. You don't talk much like a friend."

"I know it; but forgive me!"

"I will, if you consent to my wishes."

"I cannot! Request me to do anything else but that, and you shall be gratified."

"Come, come, Ernest; I begin to think that you envy me Irene.

"Curse your insolence!"

"You forget we are friends."

"And so do you."

"You and Miss Dinneford *shall* comply with my request!"

"She may; but I will not, so help me God! You have your answer now."

"You have promised to comply with any other request but that."

"And so I will, if it is reasonable."

"Always an *if* in the way! My request is simple, and not hard to be complied with. All I ask of you is to marry Irene yourself!"

He started to his feet, and seemed to wrestle with contending emotions.

"Henri!" he said, with forced calmness, "why torture me thus? If you were serious in desiring my esteem, my friendship, why seek to wound my feelings, and make me hate you?"

"I do not seek either, nor wish it. Would you not like to marry Irene?"

"No."

"I don't believe you."

"It's a matter of perfect indifference, sir!"

"Of course. But I have news for you. The engagement is broken off between Irene Dinneford and your humble servant, Henri Eaton."

When I uttered these words, he sprang towards me, exclaiming,

"Is it so? You do not mean what you say! I would to God it were true! But no, it is only renewed torture! Why do I make a fool of myself? She is nothing to me."

"It is true, nevertheless."

He now came to me, and took my hand and held it like a vice, and said,

"Can this be so? Are you sincere in what you say?"

"I am; but what is it to you? Why are you so interested? You have just said you had no desire to marry her."

"Neither was I willing to have her become your wife."

"You speak the truth now. But, as she is nothing to you,— as you do not wish to make a wife of her,— why should you feel so much interested?"

He did not seem to fancy this provoking raillery, and he regarded me some time in silence. At last he said,

"Henri, I believe you know my heart as well as I know it myself."

"On one point I know it well. You love Irene Dinneford."

"I do!"

"Very frank. If she returned your love, you would gladly make her your wife."

"Yes, and wish for no brighter heaven!"

"That would be foolish; but you have learned to speak the truth at last, so I see there is some hopes of you. Now set about winning the heart of Irene; for there is no obstacle in the way."

"But how did it happen? What was the cause of it? Why are you so ready to resign her to me? Do you not love her — does she not love you —"

"That will do," said I, interrupting him. "You are famous for asking questions. If you ask any more, I shall not remember half of them."

"You never truly loved Irene, or you could not talk as you do. O! could I but win her heart, I should be half wild with joy!"

"A very easy matter, I should suppose."

"Do you think so? What has she said? Does she ever speak of me?"

"Another long string of queries! I see you can ask questions, if you cannot talk so glibly as some; and the best way for you to get an answer to them all is to go and ask Irene if she will give you her heart and hand, and accept yours in exchange."

"You have no mercy, Henri! But I will do as you say, and if I am rejected I shall not be more miserable than I have been. But will her father consent?"

"Why not?"

"Her father is in easy circumstances, and I know that he wishes his daughters to marry men of property. Not that he is particular about their being very rich; but he would have them in the possession of a few thousands to begin life with, and I have nothing!"

"But you have a salary of seven hundred dollars a year; and, as economical as you are, you must at least save half of it."

"I do not save one cent!"

"That is strange. What can you do with it?"

"First tell me why it is that this engagement, made

under such favorable circumstances, should have ended so suddenly."

"I will do as you wish, Ernest, for it is right that you should know." I briefly narrated to him the facts, with which the reader is already sufficiently familiar, leaving out what was said in relation to him. He listened with deep interest, and as though he expected that, if Irene loved him, in such a conversation she would at least have mentioned his name.

When I had finished, he appeared disappointed. "You look dissatisfied," I remarked; "do not matters stand as you would have them?"

"Yes; but she said nothing in relation to me. If she had a preference for me, she would have said something about it."

"Perhaps so, and perhaps not; but you must remember the proverb, 'A faint heart never won a fair lady!'"

"I will remember it. Now, if you will listen patiently, I will give you a brief history of my unhappy life, and then you will cease to wonder at my sad dulness, and foolish diffidence.

"I am now twenty-eight years old, and my recollection extends back to the time when I had seen but three years. I was but three years old when my sister Adellah died, who was two years older than I. I remember her as being a child of a sweet disposition, who never tired of playing with me, and seeking to make me happy.

She died suddenly; and I recollect well that my father had struck her a severe blow a few days before, but why I knew not. Alas, I but too soon learned the cause! I looked at her as she lay in her little coffin, and her face was like marble; the rose had fled from her cheeks, the flaxen hair was combed smoothly back, and the laughing blue eyes were closed. Her fat, dimpled hands were folded upon her breast; I thought she looked sweetly, as she lay there, so still, in that spotless white dress. Alas! I did not know that it was the shroud of death. I put my hand upon her face, and it was cold as ice! I could not comprehend it. When they laid her in the grave, I was sorrowful and lonely; they told me she was in Heaven, but I wanted her here. Why should God take her there? She was not necessary to His happiness, but she was to mine.

"At this time we lived in a large, well-furnished house, and all our outward wants were abundantly supplied. My mother was a weakly woman, and, I fancied, very unhappy. We lived in a country village, and my father kept store. I soon began to notice that he was very different at times: to-day, good-natured, speaking kindly to mother, and bestowing a kiss on me; to-morrow, moody and cross. The dinner was not half cooked, and the supper spoiled. I was afraid to go near him; for he sometimes struck me, or pushed me roughly on to the floor. When he would leave the house, my mother

would sit down and weep, as though her heart would break. How often have I put my hands around her neck, and begged her to tell me why she cried! She would kiss me, and say, 'Poor Ernest! don't ask me now; you are too young yet. Alas! that you should ever know.'

"Adellah had been dead but a few months, when a little tiny thing was brought to me, one morning, as I lay in my bed, and I was told that God had sent me another sister. How thankful I was! My young heart was brimfull of joy; now I should be happy again. That young dream was never fulfilled; for the horrid truth soon forced itself upon me, that my father was a drunkard! I but half realized my misfortune then; but, to my deeply sensitive nature, it was enough to make the world, bright and lovely as it is, look dark. It would have darkened paradise!

"Put your hand upon my head; you see I have but little reverence. The reason why veneration is so small, is because I never loved and reverenced a father. I could not love him, for he was not always kind and gentle to his children, as a father should be; he abused my mother, and almost broke her heart, ere the calamity happened which stripped us of all we possessed. Parents complain of the want of reverence in their children; who is to blame? Let them conduct themselves in such a manner that their children cannot help loving and vener-

ating them, and then will they reverence the aged, God, and all good. How could I have reverence for men or God, when my father was intemperate? The little child sees his heavenly Father through his earthly parent, as we look through nature up to nature's God. But I am moralizing; and it is no wonder, when I have so suffered from the effects of intemperance, and have seen so much ruin caused by the accursed vice. Hours and hours have I dwelt upon this theme, and thought how different would have been my life, if my father had not been a drunkard,—how different I should have been,—how much misery I should have escaped, and happiness enjoyed."

"It is not well," I remarked, "to let your mind dwell upon such painful subjects."

"You are right, and I have done it too long; but I will briefly tell you all, and try to think less of them hereafter. When I was five years old another child was born, a little girl, who afterwards resembled Adellah; but she was a pale, weakly thing, and she remained with us but a few years. Soon after her birth, I was told, by my weeping mother, that my father had failed; I did not know what failing meant, but I was certain that a great calamity had befallen us. We soon after removed to an unclapboarded house, containing only three small and unfinished rooms; our carpets, our nice chairs, our best beds and looking-glasses, were all gone.

O, how desolate and gloomy seemed that old house! I shall never forget, to my dying day, how woe-begone my mother looked, as she entered that building, with little Laura in her arms. 'O my God!' she cried, 'little did I dream that I should ever come to this!' We had but few comforts now, and the world looked drear enough.

"My father, instead of forsaking his cups, and trying to retrieve his fallen fortunes, sank rapidly to the lowest depths of the detestable inebriate; he worked at different places, spending part of his earnings for rum, and with the rest buying the cheapest and coarsest articles of food. My mother, who was keenly sensitive and high-spirited, labored hard to keep her children looking clean and decent. Two other children were afterwards added to our family, both boys. Father became bloated and ragged, and as selfish as sin; intemperance bloated and swelled his body, but shrivelled up his soul. He wanted so much money for rum, that he was ever anxious that his children should not consume any more food than nature required. This, and other things, made us as voracious as swine; and we all became selfish and mean, each one striving to get the largest share of the poor food provided for us.

"I tremble to think what we might have been, if we had not had a good mother, who carefully looked after our welfare, and sought to instil good principles into our

minds. Our home was, nevertheless, often the scene of bitter altercations, and mutual upbraidings, until I came to dread my father's approach; the dull echo of his heavy footsteps fell upon my young heart like the death-knell to happiness. How horrid is the thought that a father should so conduct himself as to make his presence hateful to his children!

"I soon learned, and to my sorrow, that the sins of the father were visited upon his children in a way that made my life a still greater burden; my play-mates and school-mates looked down upon me. O, heavens! I knew they regarded me as a drunkard's child; I felt that the finger of scorn was pointed at me, and it burnt into my heart as though it had been fire! I quailed beneath it, and could no longer hold up my head. The more I bent under the heavy weight that was laid upon me, the more was I scorned. You have a nature keenly sensitive, Henri, and you may judge what I suffered. I was naturally very fond of the beautiful; every flower talked to me, and every tree waved me a welcome, and looked compassionately upon me, as if bending in benediction. I gazed into the blue sky by day and by night, and loved it; for all its starry eyes beamed with holy smiles. I delighted to quench my spirit's thirst with the airy waters which floated in light and beauty in the limitless ocean above me. But I could not live on these alone; what little child can? I craved the love,

and sympathy, and respect, of my fellow-beings; I wanted to be on an equality with children of my own age. But of what avail was this wish in my young and bleeding heart? How could I be considered equal, when I was so poor, and my father a drunkard? I could not dress like them,— I had not books, as they had. Curse them! They have spit upon me, to show their contempt! How often have I wished for a lightning-bolt, that I might crush them, and be revenged! Had I been made of sterner stuff, and possessed a less sensitive nature, I might have escaped much of this, and returned scorn for scorn, insult for insult, and blow for blow; but, as it was, I suffered with an intensity corresponding with my sensitiveness. The poisonous tooth of scorn eat into my heart's core, and the fountain of life was made bitter as gall. O God! the time came when not a star smiled for me,— not a spire of grass sprung up to carpet my rough and uneven way,— not a flower tossed to me a fragrant kiss with its rosy fingers, and the bow in the clouds, with its seven beautiful colors, embracing the earth, as the seven attributes of the Almighty encircle the children of His love, had no attractive loveliness for me; all was dark, dismal, and black as death! The light which had shone for me, when a little child, had grown fainter and fainter, until the flickering blaze had expired.

"When my sister Laura died I shed no tears, for I

never wept now; yet still I mourned her loss, but at the same time I thought how much better it was for her than to live, and suffer as I did. One of the most harrowing thoughts which continually beset me was, that people looked upon me as little better than a fool; I fancied they regarded me as a half-witted boy. So much did I dwell upon this, that there were times when I thought they were right. 'Surely,' thought I, 'I am not like other children. I am imposed upon daily. Why should I be, if I am not a fool?' O, what thoughts were these! How they racked my brain, and lay like lead upon my heart!

"All this time there were deep feelings in my breast, intense as the burning rays of the meridian sun, in July's hottest days. There were passions sleeping like lava fires, and sympathies warm and truthful, which had often broken the icy wall around them, and leaped forth, like the torrent down the mountain-side; but so cold, so freezing, was their reception, that they were ever sent back, quivering and gasping, upon my heart! My mother still loved me, and labored for my good; and this was one bright spot in my dark life. What should I not have become, if it had not been for her? I am mistaken! The world was not all dark, all sorrow, all gloom. One star did shine for me!

"When I was twelve I was sent away from home to live with those who had no sympathy for me, nor I for

them. I could not please them, for they did not understand my nature. They treated me decently well, and worked me beyond my strength. It was torture to me, for I had no heart in it. My father's career was still downward, and his family continued to suffer more and more. One after another of the children died, until none were left but Mary and me; she was the one born soon after the death of Adellah. When I was sixteen, my father died; I did not wish him to die, and yet I was not sorry when the cold earth shut him from my sight forever!

"The support of my mother and sister now devolved upon me. I did not shrink from the responsibility, but removed them far away from the harrowing scenes through which we had passed, and commenced, as it were, a new life. My mother's health was completely broken down, and God knows why she lived through so much trouble. Mary nursed her with a daughter's affectionate care, and the fruit of my labors brought us a decent support. I began once more to hold up my head; but a diffidence and reserve hung about me, which I could not shake off, and I never have to this day. I am sorrowful, but I never weep; I am joyful, yet there is still bitterness. Nature has once more opened her stores of beauty, and she has bid me select the richest gems, without money and without price. The heavens look down upon

me in love, the flowers spring up smiling at my feet, and every little child gives me a kindly glance.

"I loved Irene Dinneford, the first time I saw her; and when I thought that she was lost to me forever, I was fearful that thick gloom would once more shroud the universe. Could I but have the assurance that she loves me with that absorbing passion with which I love her, I believe I should be a different being; — the long pent-up emotions would gush forth, the ice around my heart would melt, and I should joy to weep once more.

"You wonder why I did not declare my love. I could not. I thought of my poverty, of those who were depending upon me for support, and I felt that I should be rejected. I would rather dream on. I would not darken so fair a heaven. I knew that a respectable young man had offered his hand to Agnes, and her father had persuaded her to reject him on account of his poverty. What could I expect?"

"He could not so persuade Irene," I remarked.

"I have often thought so, but I had not sufficient self-confidence. You may judge, Henri, what were my feelings, when I learned that you were engaged to her. I cursed you, in the bitterness of my heart. Then I felt how unjust I was, and what mean thoughts were festering and cankering in my breast. I watched you closely, and I soon convinced myself that you did not love Irene with that intense devotion of which a nature like yours or mine

is capable. That your regard for her was what the world would call love, I had no doubt; but that it was not true conjugal affection, I was well persuaded. I speculated much as to what her feelings were for you; but I ever felt there was more of respect than love. O, how ardently I wished that I could have been the one to have saved her, when her life was in peril! Then bitter thoughts would canker in my heart again, and I would curse my unhappy fate. I sometimes wished that you might prove to be a villain, seeking her ruin, and I might be made the instrument to save her from your hands! I acknowledge the meanness, the baseness and the depravity, of these thoughts; but they would spring up in my breast, like noxious weeds in a bed of flowers, — I could not keep them down. My mother has now almost entirely regained her health, and Mary is to be married in a few weeks. When I visit my mother, she looks so well, so contented and happy, I feel that my life has not been in vain. There is one bright spot. A retrospective glance is painful; but that one green spot is beautiful to the eyes of my ever weary spirit, even though it be enriched with tears that fall only from the heart!"

"Give me your hand, Ernest," I said, greatly affected by this narrative, by which a bleeding heart was laid bare before my eyes; "and forgive me for the words which I

uttered just now, when half angry. I knew you not, or I should not have spoken as I did."

"I have as much reason to ask forgiveness as you."

"I think not; for my object was to irritate you, and then cancel my wickedness by telling you good news. I also suffered in my younger days, and keenly too, or I should not be so passionate as I am. Ernest, you will yet be happy."

"Thank you for the prophecy; but it seems almost impossible. My life has hitherto been so dark, so hopeless, it is difficult to persuade myself that the future shall be bright. But, were I convinced that Irene loved me, I should doubt no more."

"What if her parents should prove to be an obstacle in the way?"

"That would be a misfortune; but it would not destroy my felicity, for I should still have her love, and, with that, I would defy the darkest storms of adversity! I should no more be alone; but my heart, long estranged, would have something to cling to. They might separate us,— the ocean might roll between us,— but I should still be conscious that I was not *alone!* Our spirits *would* meet,— our thoughts leap over the wide ocean, as light leaps from star to star! I do not believe it possible to separate those who love;— death cannot do it!"

"You are more eloquent than I supposed it possible for you to be. You remind me of rain, after a drouth;

when it once begins to fall, there is little cessation, until the earth is watered and the springs all full. I see that the ice is breaking up, and sweet spring is coming. But you have a curious theory in relation to lovers. According to your idea, they *cannot* be separated. Place oceans between you and those you love, and you would feel differently."

"Can you make the flowers look unlovely? Can you darken the eyes of the stars? Can you steal away the tints of the rainbow? Can you sever the chain that links humanity to its God? No! And you cannot separate the spirits of those whose beings are one. They bid defiance to time, space, eternity!"

Our conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of customers. Mr. Dinneford came soon after, and we did not resume it again.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. DINNEFORD.— MUTUAL LOVE.

In the afternoon, I asked Mr. Dinneford if he would take a walk on the Battery. He readily assented, and thither we directed our steps. It was a lovely day, and many had walked out to enjoy it, and breathe the fresh air, and let it beat full and strong against their cheeks, pale and sallow from long confinement in doors. The children, rolling their hoops and running and shouting, seemed the happiest of the happy.

As soon as I could summon sufficient courage, I broached the subject on my mind.

"I have invited you here," I said, "to speak on a subject which, under the circumstances, must be painful to us both."

"What can it be? Is the partnership business distasteful to you?"

"It is."

"Why so?"

"I don't like the mercantile business, and I have determined to leave it."

"You ought to have known that a month ago."

"I did know it; and the reason why I consented to this partnership was because — I — expected to — to — marry — Irene."

"You expected! And do you not expect to marry her now, pray?"

"To be candid with you, Mr. Dinneford, I do not."

"Are you joking, Henri, or do you say what you mean?"

"I mean what I have said."

"I am astonished! But why is this? What has happened, to change your mind, after the day was set?"

"We made the discovery that we did not love each other."

"A wonderful discovery, truly! It is all Greek to me. Are you sure that Irene does not love you?"

"I know she does not."

"A very ridiculous affair! A courtship commenced under the most romantic circumstances, the day set for the wedding, and a partnership entered into with the father; and, after all, the parties do not love each other! Very strange,— very incomprehensible!"

"And yet, I trust, you believe it."

"I suppose I must, since you say so. But, if you have not loved each other, you are both consummate hypocrites!"

"A harsh judgment."

"Not a whit too harsh. Have n't you been billing

and cooing, these two or three months,— never satisfied unless together? Why should you both manifest so much love, if you did not possess it?"

"We tried to love, but could not."

"Most likely I shall believe you,— two young people so well fitted for each other! There is some mystery about this sudden freak. I don't understand it at all."

"It does look strange, I acknowledge, but no more strange than true. My affections are placed upon another, and so are Irene's."

"Well, I suppose the mystery will be cleared up, some time; but it looks dark now, and will be a severe disappointment to me and my family."

"That is what we both most regretted."

"Did Irene speak of that?"

"Yes, and she feared that you would chide her angrily, and the thought made her very unhappy; for she said that an angry word she had never heard you speak."

"She is a good girl, and I will not be angry with her. In losing *her*, Henri, you lose a *treasure*, worth more than *gold!*"

"I know her worth well. You have reason to be proud of her."

"And yet you give her up without one regret!"

"No, no! — but I — I am attached to another."

"Who is the favored one? I think I ought to know."

"A young girl whom I delivered from a brutal master, by stratagem. She was but eleven years old then."

"Your first love, I suppose. I wish you had found it out before. Perhaps you may find one or two more you have benefited in a similar way; if so, woe to the one who has your affections now!"

"You are not candid. I can never love another as I love her."

"I hope you will be very sure of it before you again set the day to be married, or form another partnership."

"I shall."

"Did you say Irene had formed an attachment for some one?"

"I did."

"Are you at liberty to give me his name?"

"Yes — no,— but I suppose I may, without doing wrong. It is Ernest Brown."

"Ernest Brown! I am surprised more and more. Are you certain of what you say?"

"I am."

"It does not look likely to me that she would prefer him to you; but there is no accounting for tastes."

"Love will go where it is sent, you know."

"So I should think. What are his feelings towards her?"

"The same as hers towards him."

"This state of things I regret. Ernest is well

enough; but he is not such a man as I should have chosen for Irene,— he would do better for Agnes."

"You are mistaken, sir; you don't know Ernest."

"You may be right, but he is very poor."

"He has a noble mind and soul; and I hope you will not withhold your approval on account of his poverty."

"I would like to know what he does with his salary."

"Supports a sick mother, and a sister who takes care of her; — what nobler use could he make of it?"

"I will inquire into this matter; and, if what you say is true, I will not be an obstacle in the way of their happiness. If Ernest has been the dutiful son you have represented him to be, I shall be proud to own him as my daughter's husband. Far, better that she should marry a virtuous poor man than a vicious rich one."

We here fell in with a gentleman of Mr. Dinneford's acquaintance, and they having some business matters to talk over, I went to the shop. There were no customers in, and I told Mr. Brown that he might be as expeditious as he pleased, for all things were favorable,— so he had better strike while the iron was hot.

"What do you mean?" he inquired.

"What do I mean? Why, how dull you are, Ernest! Are you not aware that the heaven, which you would not have any brighter, if you could, can now be gained by a little effort?"

"You are real heartless, to joke in that way."

"I am not joking; but I want you to take time by the fore-lock,— that is all."

"Please explain yourself."

"Well, some folks are stupid. What I mean is simply this: you must go and see Irene, and declare your love."

"Don't call me stupid, for I am rather sensitive on that point. The joke has too much truth in it. But when must I, most excellent master, do the thing which you require at my hands?"

"To-night; this very evening."

"I shall not obey."

"Why not?"

"It was but last evening that your engagement terminated. She would not wish to form another so soon. Nor would she suppose that I knew anything about it, and she would think me very presumptuous. It would show a lack of delicacy, on my part, to broach the subject now."

"Well, do as you think best; but I should not wait."

"You always go on the high-pressure principle; but I cannot."

In a few days after this, I wrote to Helen Means, informing her that my engagement with Irene had come to an end, and that I should soon return home.

One morning, about two weeks from the time we held our last conversation, when Ernest came into the shop I could but gaze upon him with surprise. I was looking

for a change sometime, but not one so great as his countenance indicated.

His pale cheeks were flushed, and his dull eyes flashed with a radiant brightness. They seemed to be illumined by a wild light, softened by the presence of pure joy and unalloyed happiness. As I looked at his beaming countenance, I felt that the long imprisoned spirit had been released from its bondage. O! what a power there is in love to make the darkest skies bright, the most hopeless lot beautiful as a smiling landscape on a summer's morn! Those who truly love are invincible. This solidarity of hearts renders them impervious to the world's scorn or hate. Rather, I should say, renders *it;* for the two make but one. Separate and alone, we are fractions, exposed to many temptations and adversities; we are weak, and when the storms of life beat upon us we bend beneath them in bitter agony, unable to stand up and face them manfully. United, we become entire,—the two make one, and the weakness becomes power; like a three-fold cord, it cannot be broken. The strength of the two becomes the strength of the one; their powers melt and mingle together and consolidate, and, though soft as the petals of a rose, they are harder than the rock. Soft to humanity's touch, but to the cold fingers of misfortune and injustice hard as flint.

I rallied Ernest on his improved appearance, telling

him, however, that he had looked the misanthrope, but now the maniac.

"I shall not crave your mercy," he replied; "for I have a shield now that will render all your shafts impervious."

"The shield of love, perchance. Much good may it do you! How many hours did you sleep, last night?"

"I will tell you when you inform me what right you have to ask such questions?"

"Of course you understand what right I have. I am your good genius, you know."

"I had forgotten that fact; but what right has my good genius to ask saucy questions?"

"Saucy questions! You are improving very fast. I see that people change with circumstances. But how about those tears,— was there a regular deluge? I fancy that I can trace the course of the torrents, which rushed with mighty inpetuosity over your face."

"Come, come, that will do. I am happier than I was, and I believe that my cup will yet be brimming with joy."

"I hope so."

"Thank you. I thought, soon after you came here, that you would prove a deadly curse to me; but, instead of that, although your presence has caused me hours of sorrow, it has been all for the best, for you have been the means of doing me great good."

"But greater injury, I fear; but I am willing to square accounts."

"So am I; and may you be as happy as I now hope to be!"

"O, I shall be; never fear for me!"

"You speak with assurance, and I hope you will not be disappointed."

"I hope so, too. Depend upon it, Ernest, the future has bright skies and sunshine for us both."

CHAPTER XX.

DEATH OF MY MOTHER.

I NOW had the pleasure of meeting Ernest and Irene frequently together. It made me happier and better, to see how happy they were. In feelings, hopes and sympathies, they were one. I knew that their union, should it ever take place, would be a true one; for the silken chain of love had so bound them that death itself could not sever it. They did not manifest so much sickly sentimentality that they might be called, as a quaint writer has expressed it, "a couple of lumps of love;" and yet you could see that love was the attraction that drew them together, and made them one. And therein was union, devotion, self-sacrifice, truth, honor, and beauty as joyous as heaven. Marriage without such love, is but a tragic farce.

At the request of Mr. Dinneford, Ernest gave him a truthful account of his life, which showed his character in its true light.

"You have suffered so much," said he, "that God forbid that I should stand in the way of your happiness!"

The moody dulness and diffidence of Mr. Brown gradually wore away, as the fogs leave the valleys

when the sun pours its rays down upon them, causing them to creep up their sides, and disappear over the mountain tops. The sun of love now shone around him, dispersing the shadows of a woful life.

I now determined to remain in New York until the time had expired for which I had bargained. Ernest, instead of leaving on the first of January, renewed his engagement for another year, his salary being increased two hundred dollars. When my time had nearly expired, I received the following letter from brother Thomas:

"I feel it a duty, my brother, to inform you that "mother is sinking rapidly. She has not long to live "in this world. She does not speak of you; and yet I "know she would be glad to see you. She has not "set eyes upon you for a number of years, and it "must be a relief to her overburdened heart to see "you once more. Be *sure* and come. You need not "fear the deacon, for you are a man now. No doubt, "when you see him, you will *love* him as well as you ever "did. And why should you not love your venerable "*father?* The deacon is now sixty years old, but his "hair is black as it ever was. There is a secret con- "nected with this; he colors it once a month. No "vanity in that,—of course not! Shall I draw the old "man's portrait? I will do it faithfully; for I do so "want you to love him, when next you meet!

"It is some time since you saw your loving *parent;* "and, as I fear you may have forgotten some of the items, "I will put them all in. He is standing now in front of "the house, and I can see him from where I am writing "(with my mind's eye, I can always see him). There he "is, full six feet high, broad-shouldered, and looking very "black in the face. His ugly, staring eyes have that "same glare as when you were accustomed to see him, "only more so. The high cheek-bones are more promi- "nent than ever, for the swarthy cheeks have fallen in. "The forehead is wrinkled and knotty, and the great "shaggy eyebrows look savage as a bear. His mouth "is more ugly than ever, and his few remaining teeth "have that yellowish-black appearance which is usually "produced by long acquaintance with a filthy tobacco- "pipe. His whole physiognomy has that same ugly, "pharisaical look as of yore,— only it has increased with "age. His temper and disposition have been growing "worse and worse, from year to year, ever since you left "home. His prayers have so increased in length, that "they give you the best idea of an eternity of punish- "ment of anything you can possibly have. He is still "considered a burning and shining light in the church; "that is, by some people. He frets, and scolds, and prays, "and talks of God and eternity, more and more. At "every religious meeting you are sure to find him; and "who, among all the saints, can sing so loud, talk so elo-

"quently of Christian duty, or pray so long? He is "shocked at all kinds of amusements. A ball-room he "considers a hell upon earth; and to play a simple game "of whist, a sin almost unpardonable. He believes in "the salvation of but a few; the rest are to be eternally "wretched. I have heard him say that he had no hope "of his former wife, and was doubtful in relation to little "Katy;—he was fearful they were forever lost! "In fact, he is a perfect enigma to me; for he appears to "be sincere.

"You will think the above remarks entirely out of "place, commencing, as I did, with an account of the ill-"ness of mother. But he now treats her so shamefully "that I could not help bringing him before you. He "has no little children now to abuse and trample upon, "and so he heaps all his abuse upon his wife. He tells "her that she is not that pious, devoted woman he sup-"posed her to be when he married her; she has been "worldly-minded, caring more for the things of earth "than for things of the kingdom. He taunts her con-"tinually about her children, whom he calls devils, chil-"dren for the fire. So fiercely does he look, at times, "that he frightens her; and I should not wonder if she "fancied him to be the arch-fiend himself.

"It is hard to endure these things; but what can I do? "The world's people have no more faith in him now than "have you or I; but the church sustains him. I prophesy

"that it will not, much longer. I suppose that he has "been a hypocrite so many years, it has become a second "nature with him. He is terribly mean and miserly, and "sometimes I think that his soul is so small he need "not trouble himself as to its fate. He will yet become "a vile, sordid miser, or I am no prophet.

"Jane would have been married, ere this, but she felt "it her duty to remain with mother. I am glad she has "done so, for mother is better taken care of than she "could have been had she left. Do not delay your com- "ing many days, or it may be too late. Spring is with us "once more, and the showers and sunshine have covered "the earth with verdure, young, fresh, and beautiful. "Alas! that when nature is awakening to newness of life, "death should be so near! THOMAS EATON."

It was now May, and my engagement had nearly expired. In the mean time I arranged everything for a speedy departure to my long-forsaken home,—a home which still had attractions, for all my brothers and sisters were there, and I had not forgotten that it was once the home of my father and my darling Herbert, and that there they both died, breathing out the most faithful love for me. I was going to see my mother, from whom I had long been separated, and for whom I had no filial affection; for but little parental love had she ever manifested for me. My feelings towards her were more akin to hate

than love. But she was on her death-bed now, and it was my duty to see her once more, and bid her spirit depart in peace.

When I came in view of my boyhood's home, a thousand thoughts rushed upon my mind,— some pleasing, but more sad and unhappy. I was delighted to behold again those old familiar scenes. There was the old dwelling-house, surrounded with beautiful trees, many of which had grown quite large in my absence; they were now about clothing themselves with a coat of young and tender leaves, and they looked so beautiful, so inviting, that it was hard to think that in that building which they overshadowed like the wings of a guardian angel was so much wrong and suffering. Willis' beautiful lines were brought forcibly to my mind:

> "How strikingly the course of nature tells,
> By its light heed of human suffering,
> That it was fashioned for a happier world!"

The fields all around were brightening with the upspringing verdure, and the hills and woods were glad in the smiling sunlight. The earth was beautiful, and the heavens glorious. The sunbeams looked golden on hill and vale and waving forest tree; the air was soft and warm, and the birds sang in the trees or carolled on the wing, as they flew from bower to bower, from green hills to greener valleys. "And can it be," thought I, "that in the very midst of this loveliness, harmony

and beauty, there is sickness and pain,— that the one who gave me birth is nigh unto the gates of death? Alas! it is so. And here, amid this rural scenery, this God-created harmony, this heart-uplifting and soul-inspiring beauty, have lived, from year to year, those created a 'little lower than the angels,' and yet foul, dark things in the midst of purity and light,— serpents in Paradise, devils in heaven! Professing much godliness, but destitute of love, charity and kindness; praying often, but never worshipping in spirit and in truth. In the midst of beauty the most ravishing and delightful, deformed and offensive. Surrounded with harmony, but an eternal discord. With love glowing in every sunbeam, whispered by every zephyr, written on every leaf, breathing from every flower, melting from every bird-note, and smiling from every star, bearing about with them hearts filled with hatred and bitterness,— their thirsty souls never once drinking in a refreshing draught from this ocean of light and life!"

I gazed long and thoughtfully down the road that led to the school-house, which I had often travelled in my younger days,— my bitter life refreshed by thoughts which cheered my heart, as though they had been whispered by angels. I could see, far away, a gleam or two of the dark waters of my favorite stream, where I had watched the beautifully-tinted fish, and where my good spirit led me in my dream. The cattle fed in the pastures near by, as

of yore, and the sheep were cropping the grass on the side of a distant hill. How glad I was to feast my eyes upon these old familiar scenes! I performed the last part of my journey in an open wagon, that I might the better enjoy the scenery through which I should pass. At my request, when approaching my boyhood's home, I was driven very slowly; and hence had time for observation, thought and reflection.

I was met at the door by sister Jane, who expressed great thankfulness that I had come in season. As I entered, I saw the deacon, looking darker and more repugnant than I had ever seen him before. He was sitting in an old-fashioned kitchen chair, smoking his detestable black pipe. When his eyes fell on me, he arose, and, with a look like a demon, asked, "What brings you here?" He had recognized me at the first glance. I did not suppose he would know me. A beseeching look from Jane prevented my answering him. She led me to another room, where I could be free from his presence. Here a fire was kindled, and here I soon had the pleasure of seeing my brothers and other sisters; and here, in spite of the deacon's grumbling, we took our meals, undisturbed by him, or any of the hateful tribe.

In the afternoon I was told that mother would see me. I entered the room, and was surprised to witness the change which had taken place since I last saw her. The full, red cheeks were pale and sunken; the fierce,

bright eye dull and listless; the red lips white as death; her hands were white and skinny, her body poor and emaciated. She was but a miserable wreck of the once strong and healthy woman. Her countenance gave evidence of cruel suffering. I had cherished hatred for my own mother, and some of the bitterness which had sprung up in my heart when a child had lingered still. But when I saw her reduced so low, and read of so much anguish in every lineament of her face, every vestige of hate departed forever; and, though I did not love her, I pitied her from the bottom of my heart, and I would not, for my life, have added one pang to her already overburdened soul, by look, word or deed. When I approached her bedside she looked up, inquiringly, and said, in a faint voice,

"Is this Henri Eaton?"

"It is, mother; do you not know me?"

"O, yes; I now see your father's looks very plainly. Are you well?" extending her feeble hand.

I took it and pressed it slightly, replying that I was in very good health, and I was sorry to find her so low.

"I have not long to live," she answered; "and I am glad you have come. How you have grown! I can see more and more of your father's looks. Henri, your father was a good man."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, mother."

"I did not know it when he was living; but I know

it now. Henri, can you forgive your poor, sick mother the wrong she did you when a child?"

"Forgive you? Yes, mother, with all my heart; and wherein I have done wrong, may you extend to me as free a pardon!"

"I did that long ago, Henri; for I felt that you were but little to blame. You had your father's active temperament, and you were more passionate than was ever your mother. But, had I treated you as a mother should, you would have been different. Since I married Deacon Webber, and especially since I have lain upon a sick bed, I have had ample time to think of all these things. I felt that I could not die in peace until I had the assurance of your forgiveness; but you were so passionate and revengeful that I dreaded to see you, for fear you would overwhelm me with bitter curses, and bring up again the old scenes of agony through which we had passed. Those scenes caused you much suffering then, but they have caused me more since. Until within a few days, I have seldom mentioned your name; and when I expressed a wish to see you, I was told that you had been sent for. I was thankful, and yet I dreaded the moment when mother and child would meet again. But the bitterness is past, and I shall now die in peace. I find that you are as ready to forgive as you are to hate; and it is well for you that you are. Cherish this spirit of forgiveness,

for it will do you good. The more I have forgiven, the better I feel, and the more willing am I to die."

Here a violent fit of coughing came on, which lasted so long that we were not able to resume our conversation until the next day.

When I visited her again, I was happy to observe that her countenance wore a less troubled expression, was more calm and serene. She smiled when she saw me, and in such a manner as to warm my heart; for it seemed to me to be the first real motherly smile that I had ever received from her. I was glad to receive it now.

"We were talking, last night," she said, "in relation to forgiving those who have injured us. I have felt the necessity of pardon from those whom I have wronged; and God knows that, whatever my feelings have been, I as freely forgive those who have injured me, as I would have them forgive the wrongs I have inflicted.

"There is one, Henri, whom I greatly wronged; and, if she would freely forgive, I could die happy."

"And will she not,— now that you are drawing nigh to the gates of death,— now that you have so brief a period to spend in this world?"

"I do not know. But I did not realize then what a terrible sin it was to counsel a cruel man to most cruelly abuse a little child. Reflection and observation have taught me that the injuries she received at my

hands were very great. The worst of cruelty is that which is inflicted upon a child."

"To whom do you refer?" I inquired, a good deal agitated.

"To the little girl who, through your aid, escaped from Deacon Webber."

"And you would have her forgiveness?"

"Yes; for I counselled the deacon to adopt the most rigorous and cruel measures, in order to make her obey him in all things; for, he said, she was very stubborn and disobedient. I now feel that, however much she might have been to blame, even if she were as wicked and abandoned as the deacon said she was, the treatment which I advised was most cruel and unjust."

"I am glad to hear you say so. But Helen Means never deserved ill or harsh treatment at all; for she was always pure and good. Uncle and aunt will tell you that she is an angel."

"Does she live with them?"

"Yes, and has, ever since she left Deacon Webber."

"Strange that I have never known she was there!"

"I supposed you did. Have neither of the children mentioned her name?"

"No, nor I to them. If she is as faultless as you say, she has much to forgive; for her treatment was nothing but absolute cruelty. May God forgive me for being an accessory in so foul a crime!"

"But you thought she was wicked and abandoned."

"Yes, and I now see, more clearly than ever, the character of the man to whom I gave my hand in marriage. O, bitterly have I repented that fatal step! Do you think Helen Means would forgive me, when I so have wronged her?"

"Forgive! Yes, and fall upon your neck and mingle her tears of sympathy with your tears of suffering. But she has nothing to forgive now."

"Why not?"

"She forgave you at the time, and chided me for the harsh epithets which I freely applied to you. She forgave all her enemies,—even Deacon Webber."

"She must have been a beautiful child. I thought you very wicked then, in aiding her escape; but I now see that you acted right, and God will reward you."

"I have already received my reward; it came in the deed. So happy was I that she had escaped and found a safe asylum, that I could have suffered anything without a murmur."

"Happy are those who do good as they have opportunity; for they have joy which the mere pleasure-seeker can never know. My character may have seemed strange to you, Henri, and it would be strange if it had not. Take down the bead bag, that hangs by the window, and

in it you will find a key, which will unlock the little drawer in the secretary. In that drawer is a sealed package, which I intrust to you, the seal not to be broken until I am in my grave. When the cold earth lies above me, then read it, and think as well of your mother as you can. I hope it may soften the feelings which your treatment in childhood must have caused. Now leave me; for I am very weary, and fain would rest."

My mother lingered but a few days more, and then fell into the peaceful slumber of death. So kind, so gentle was she to me in her last hours, that I wept long when she died. I felt that I had lost my mother. She had so changed, during the last year, that the other children were deeply afflicted. We wept together, happy that we could feel to weep.

Uncle and Aunt Eaton and Mrs. Stewart came to my mother's funeral; but they did not bring Helen, as I desired. They said she was well, but chose not to come, and they did not urge her.

We now made the best arrangements we could for the deacon to leave, and his family. Happy were we to see the house freed from the presence of those we detested. They returned to the old place, and Hezekiah soon after built a house near by. Mrs. Stewart, at our urgent solicitation, consented once more to take up her abode with us. This arrangement was highly gratifying to us all; for we loved Mrs. Stewart when children, and we

felt that, as long as she remained with us, we should not be destitute of a mother. She was as much gratified as were we, although she said that her stay with my uncle had been the happiest part of her life, excepting when she lived with her husband and child. My uncle and aunt, she said, were like a good brother and sister to her; and as for Helen, the dear child had been more than a daughter. And yet, she was glad to come back to us; for it was returning to old friends and to old scenes. "This," said she, "is, after all, my home."

It was well for us that she came; for, if she had not been with us, I fear we should have made sad work of it. There would not have been so much union and peace. We were all quick-tempered and passionate, with the exception of Jane; and all but myself had lived years with those who would spoil the dispositions of angels. It was no marvel that they had so little government over themselves, after so fatal a training. To my surprise, Mrs. Stewart made me a right-hand man as a peacemaker. I knew that I was unfit for the office; and that my place should be as a pupil, rather than a teacher. But under her instructions I succeeded admirably. I should have been ashamed to have allowed my passions to triumph over my reason, under such circumstances. I was well aware that more ought to be expected of me than of my brothers and sisters; for I had been free for some time from the contamination of discord and evil examples. But

I soon vacated the office; and, in due season, the reader will learn the reason why. When everything had been satisfactorily arranged, I determined to visit my uncle's, for I was impatient to see Helen. I now recollected that I had not opened the package which mother had placed in my care. On a warm and beautiful day, I took it and wandered to an old favorite spot; and, seating myself in the shade of a buttonwood-tree, broke the seal and read it. The reader will find the contents in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HEART UNVEILED.

"DEAR HENRI: You may be surprised that I should "address you thus, after our long disaffection and sep- "aration, with no reconciliation. But I feel now, not- "withstanding the unnatural feuds which have existed "betweeu us, that you are nevertheless dear to me, and "so are all my children. It has not been always so; "but I now see things in a different light; the scales "are taken from my eyes, and I am no longer blind. "Time changes all things; and it is sometimes well that "our thoughts, feelings and affections, undergo as great "a change as those things of a more outward nature. "We sometimes think we see, when we are blind; and "hear, when we are deaf. We sometimes hearken to "passion and hatred, when we should listen to conscience "and reason. Circumstances of a varied nature cause "us to assume a wrong position, to take a false step, or "choose the wrong path; and, when convinced of the "error, pride or self-will forbids us to retrace our steps; "and so we rush on, shutting our eyes to the conse- "quences which *must* follow. Injustice, disappointment,

"the severing of holiest ties and dearest attachments, "dethrone reason, bewilder judgment, overflow the heart "with grief, and make it bitter and hard. Could we "look into the hearts of men, women, and children, "we should be more charitable than we are. We should "then verify the old proverb, that 'truth is stranger "than fiction.'

"In the printed pages of books, we read many won- "derful and mysterious things, things that startle and "astound; but, could we read the human heart, we "should find things there that were never read in books, "and never can be. We read of oppression, of cruelty, "of crime and terrible wrongs, in books, and in the "columns of newspapers; of scenes so horrible that tears "and blood seem to start from the words which tell the "awful tale. Could we read the pages which lie folded "within the human breast,— the thoughts, the cruelties, "the wrongs which they would reveal,— those in books "would be but as a spring zephyr, which plays among "flowers, to the mighty tempest that goes thundering o'er "the main, tossing great ships, as the light wind tosses a "feather. And from the words there inscribed would, "in very truth, ooze blood and tears! And those words "would teach us many startling truths, which the wicked "and abandoned would little care if they were read of "all men; but many who occupy high stations in church "and state would bleach with shame at the thought.

"Those pages would solve many dark enigmas,—show "the causes that makes us what we are. Henri, I may "never see you again; and, if I should, I could not tell "you all that I may write. I will place my thoughts "on paper, that when I am dead you may read and "know what they are. The narrative which I leave you, "read, and ponder well, and judge of me as ye would be "judged.

"Since I wrote the above, I have sat some time, with "my head upon my hand, looking upon the past; and, "as my thoughts have wandered back, far back, tears "have started from my eyes, and trickled down through "my fingers. I have wandered back to the days of "childhood, when I was a joyous, light-hearted child,— "when there seemed so many beautiful things in this "weary, weary world. How glorious then seemed the "future to me!—so very, very bright; and the laughing "loves stood in flower-crowned pathways, and, with their "white, dimpled hands, tossed me fragrant kisses, and "beckoned me to follow, as though I had just tasted of "the sweets of life, and my good angels would lead me "to where life is perfect; as though I had but drank of "the rippling stream, and the water-spirits would guard "me to the fountain. O, how overwhelming is the "thought that I should so have changed! Terrible was "it to find the world so full of bitterness, when I ex- "pected sweets; but more terrible still that I should

"have discovered so much bitterness in my own heart!
"My poor brain grows wild as I look upon my former self,
"as she passes before the eye of the mind, and read her
"heart. How imperfect I was then! — but to what lower
"depths have I descended since!

"Comparatively speaking, my youthful days were
"very happy,— the most blessed and beautiful of my life.
"I was surrounded with every luxury that heart could
"wish; and my parents were usually kind, and so were
"my brothers and sisters. I stood in awe of no one, but
"my father. He was generally indulgent to me; but
"his will was stern and unbending, and mine of a
"similar stamp,— though strong as iron in the presence
"of others, was like wax in the fire, when it came in
"contact with his. He had but little control over his
"passions, and when any of the family opposed his
"wishes he would overwhelm them with a torrent of vile
"epithets and vituperation; and it did not matter at all,
"with him, who were the witnesses of his ungentlemanly
"and foolish conduct. So many times had he done this,
"when our townsmen and friends and strangers were
"present, that I would have done almost anything rather
"than cross his wishes in the least; for I would not
"have them know that my father was so reckless, and
"had so little consideration for the feelings of his children.
"With all his other faults, my father lacked principle

"sadly, and I inherited and learned of him more than "was for my good.

"The most of the time, during my childhood, I was "gay and happy; and should have been so always, if my "father had had more respect for himself and children, "and I had possessed more principle and less temper. "The latter was often my bane, and a lack of the former "frequently led me into difficulties.

"I was a good lover, and a good hater. I had a few "friends, whom I loved intensely; but the majority of "those I frequently met with I regarded with indif- "ference. But I knew the latter had the power to "injure me, and that they justly regarded me as proud; "and I know not but that I feared my father's out- "breaks of passion in their presence more than in the "presence of my friends. It made but little difference "whether the former or the latter were witnesses; my "face would ever crimson with shame. There was "another class of persons whom I despised,— hated, "with as much intensity as I loved those who were near- "est and dearest. I was often a favorite; for, though "self-willed and passionate, I was considered unusually "fascinating, and by many as very handsome. A lack "of principle, and an ungovernable temper, were my "greatest imperfections. But, with these even, I should "have been a very different being, if my whole nature "had not been so terribly embittered.

"From what I have said you will perceive that I was "capable of forming a very strong attachment,—of lov- "ing with the deepest intensity; and that I should be "very likely to form such an attachment, when I should "meet with the right one, without consulting the wishes "of others.

"In one thing I differed very much from my father. "He thought too highly of family, and wealthy connec- "tions. All who were rich were worthy of considera- "tion. The poor received but little notice from him, "however talented or meritorious. With these false "notions I had no sympathy; for I had the utmost "contempt for young men of wealthy families, whose "greatest merit consisted in knowing how to squander "money which their parents had earned, and in uttering "soft, meaningless compliments to ladies, as they were "called, who replied to their namby-pamby remarks in a "similar strain, rendered more ridiculous by the super- "fluous and outrageous abuse of adjectives. Some of "the finest words in our language are continually on "the rack; and they are compelled to associate with "uncongenial company, and do and say very many silly "and contemptible things. You hear of the most gor- "geous wedding-cake, beautiful beef-steak, delightful "doughnuts, splendid pie, elegant puddings,—elegant "walking, elegant water, elegant flowers, elegant hair "or whiskers, elegant mouth, and elegant everything.

"I could not but despise such, both male and female, "and their imitators; while I respected many young men "who were talented, and their minds well stored with "knowledge. I cherished such feelings when I was not "more than fourteen. I felt a contempt for my father's "views in relation to these things, and prided myself in "differing from him.

"At sixteen, I was sent sixty miles from home, to "school. I there formed an acquaintance with a young "man, which soon ripened into passionate mutual love. "He was four years older than myself, and was endeavor- "ing to secure an education which would fit him for an "honorable position in society. A brief description of "him will suffice. About the middling height, straight "and slim. His head was large, forehead expansive, "eyes black, and glowing with intellectual beauty. When "they were fixed in melting admiration upon me, I was "entranced, bewildered, and I could have died feeling "that their light would lift my soul to heaven!

"He was an orphan and poor; but what cared I? So "passionate was my love, that I would have preferred a "rude cottage with him, rather than a palace without "him, or with one I could not love. We were often "together; and one autumn evening, when we had wan- "dered far away from our companions, he told me of "his love. With what rapture I listened to his passion- "ate words, so glowing and truthful! I tried to speak,

"but could not; my bosom heaved with intense emotion, "and I fell upon his breast and burst into tears. Thus "you see how ungovernable were my feelings, whether "of love or hatred. My passions were hasty and impul- "sive, and sometimes entirely overpowering me; but not "always, for I could, at times, manifest the utmost indif- "ference, to the dearest object on earth. I had often "done it to Herbert. But, although I could, and did, "manifest great coldness frequently, yet my attachments "were strong, and when I had once made up my mind "it was inflexible, especially at this period of my life. I "might seem to yield to my stern father, but only from "fear of an outbreak with him, with whom I could not "well contend, and that I might escape the mortification "which his ungovernable tongue would cause me, and the "more surely gain my object.

"When Herbert and I were more calm, I told him "that his love was returned, but I feared there was one "almost insurmountable obstacle in the way of our happi- "ness. He anxiously inquired what it was. I informed "him that my father was proud and unyielding, and "that his children must marry only those whom he ap- "proved. Well knowing his character, thoughts, feelings, "wishes, I was very certain that he had determined "upon my marrying a man with at least a respectable "fortune.

"Herbert (his name was Herbert Bending) was not

"discouraged by this information, but proposed to write to "my father at once, asking his permission to pay his "addresses to his daughter, as we were already devotedly "attached to each other. This step I opposed, as it might "jeopardize our happiness. I told him that he need not "fear, for he alone should be my husband; and I cared "not for the wishes of my father, and should not consult "them. I loved him, and that was enough for me; and I "would swear to wed only him. When I gave utterance "to these sentiments, I fancied I saw a shade of disap-"pointment upon his face. I thought he regretted to "learn that I had no filial fear for my father, and was "ready any moment to disobey him, should his wishes "come in contact with mine. He replied to my remarks "by saying that he could not conscientiously consent to "a clandestine engagement, until all other measures had "failed. I was somewhat vexed to hear him say this; "for, as I was willing to sacrifice everything for his sake, "I thought he should not hesitate to sacrifice what I "regarded as the foolish qualms of conscience. 'No,' "said he, 'I will act honorably, and so gain your father's "approval; and then I will work like a hero to place "myself in a situation to be worthy of you.' I was "proud to see him so self-confident, although I despaired "of the result. I knew my father too well.

"The letter was written and sent. He wrote truth-"fully of his poverty, but also of his determined spirit

"and bright hopes. By his own unaided efforts he would "hew out for himself a fortune and a name. He desired "my father's approbation and good wishes; and, having "his daughter's love, it would be a great stimulant to "action, to perseverance; and he would never ask my "hand in marriage until he had placed himself in a "position that my father might well be proud of in a "son-in-law.

"It was now vacation time, and we were almost con- "stantly together. Sometimes we went with our school- "mates (those who had not returned home) on a fishing "or plumming excursion; or we visited some high hill or "mountain, or passed pleasant afternoons under shady "trees by a beautiful sheet of water. Our growing inti- "macy was not unnoticed; but no one chided us, or inter-. "fered in the least. Herbert was highly respected by "all, and hence we were left unmolested.

"Those were blissful days, beautiful with sunlight, and "yet not without their shadows. I was ever fearful of "coming trouble,— of separation from the one I loved so "dearly. I had what a phrenologist would term large "secretiveness; and yet I sometimes advanced sentiments "in the presence of Herbert which he seemed very much "to disapprove. Whenever he detected a lack of princi- "ple, he would look at me earnestly, as if half doubting "whether I had expressed my real views. If he came to "the conclusion that I had, he would look troubled and

"disconcerted, and then suddenly brighten up, as though "he hoped, in time, to destroy the hateful weed, root "and branch. O, how much I loved him! So well, "that every glance he gave me, every expression, every "change of countenance, are daguerreotyped on my poor "bleeding heart to-day, and they will go with me to my "grave. And shall I see him in a better world? Alas! "if I should, what will he think of me? Can he look "down low enough to see me? Can I look up high "enough to see him? In whatever light he may regard "me, whatever may be his thoughts, I wish to see his "beautiful face once more. I would pray for that, even "were he an angel and I a damned spirit.

"About two weeks after Herbert had written, I was "surprised, one afternoon, to see my father drive up to "my boarding-house. He met me with a grave and "severe air; and, after we had entered my room, he "bade me get ready to start for home immediately.

"'Why leave for home so suddenly?' I inquired; "'are any of the family sick?'

"'Yes, sick of your conduct. A pretty miss you are, "truly! I sent you here for an education, that when "you were old enough you might not disgrace the gen- "tleman whom I have chosen for your husband; but "you are no sooner out of my sight than you are in love "with the first miserable puppy who fawns upon you, "and licks your hand! Shame on you, Mary! I hoped

"better things of you. Never let it be said again that "you are like your father. If you do not know your "place better than this, I will keep you under lock and "key until you learn; — do you hear? But get ready, "girl, for I am in haste; you would have seen me "ere this, if I had been at home when the churl's letter "came.'

"With a bitter and rebellious heart, I packed my "clothes and books for a speedy departure. When I "was ready I went into the drawing-room, to say good-"by to the family with whom I boarded, and my school-"mates who boarded with me. My father called for pen "and ink, and they were immediately placed upon the "table. It is said to be unmannerly to whisper in the "presence of company; my father would never do it; "but he would speak in a tone of voice that no one pres-"ent could understand, excepting the person or persons "to whom he addressed his remarks. I had learned to "converse in the same manner before leaving home. "After I had spent a few minutes in conversation with "the different members of the family, my father, who "was sitting on the opposite side of the room, watching "me closely, beckoned me to a seat by his side. He "held in his hand a sheet of paper, folded like a letter. "He showed me the back of it; it was addressed to "Herbert.

"'What is that?' said I.

"'A letter of dismissal,' he said; 'and you must put "your name to it.'

"'*Must* put my name to it?'

"'Yes, *must*. It is time this love-foolery was ended.'

"'Let me read it first.'

"'Do as I command you, and go to that table and "sign your name;—do you hear?' And he gave me a "look so dark and threatening, that I trembled lest he "should give vent to his pent-up wrath in the presence "of my friends, who were all strangers to him.

"'Do let me read it,' I said, faintly.

"'I swear you shall not! I know what's proper to "be written; and I am in haste, and will not dally "longer.'

"'I beg of you to let me know what it contains!' "His face was now growing black with suppressed rage, "and his eyes seemed to burn like hot coals. He knew "his power, and my weakness, but too well; and, with "the fore-finger of his right hand pointing to me in a "most threatening manner, he said, '*Will you sign "it?*'

"I now well knew that all the bitterness of his heart "would be poured upon me in one moment more, if I "longer refused to obey. I took my eyes from his, and "looked to see if those who were in the room were "noticing us; they were all gazing upon us, with sur-

"prise and curiosity depicted upon their countenances. "I did not hesitate longer, but went to the table and "wrote my name, and handed the letter back to my "father. If I had been alone with him, I would not "have done it; but, as it was, I had not the courage to "do otherwise; would to God that I had! We started "for home soon after, and I had not seen Herbert, nor "exchanged a word with one of my intimate friends. "On our journey home my father reproached me in the "most cruel and heartless manner, and told me that I "had sent a letter to my lover that would settle the "matter, and there would be no further trouble. When "he said this I looked him in the face, and saw the "evidence of such diabolical cunning, that I grew sick "and faint, and should have swooned if I had not made "strong efforts to save myself. After a few minutes' "reflection, I consoled myself with the thought that I "should write so soon that my imprudence would not "result in any permanent injury.

"We arrived home the next day, and I immediately "penned a brief note to Herbert. He never received it; "and, I doubt not, it was intercepted by my father. "I never asked him, but I am well aware that he was "wicked enough to do it. God forgive him the fatal "wrong, and may all who hear my sad story take warn-"ing! Let parents beware how they trifle with the "holiest affections of the human heart. I did not feel to

'forgive my father while he lived, nor for many years "after he died; but now my feelings are changed, and I "freely pardon him, as I hope for mercy from God, and "forgiveness, ere I die, from all those whom I have "injured.

"I requested Herbert to write as soon as he received "my note; but day after day passed away, and I was "kept in suspense, and terrible suffering.

"I had been at home some two weeks, when a letter "was brought to me by my sister Ellen; — its seal was "black. I went to my room, and, with feelings which "can be better conceived of than told, I examined the "superscription, to learn from whom it came. A glance "satisfied me that it was from my dearest friend and "companion at school, Amanda Wingate. With my "breath suppressed, the pulsations of my heart stilled, "with fearful dread and terrible forebodings, I broke "the seal, and read but one dreadful sentence, in which "all the letters seemed darts of fire, leaping to fasten "themselves in my heart. 'Herbert is dead!' I could "read no more; my brain reeled, my head swam, my "eyes grew dim, and I shrieked in terrible agony, and "fell heavily to the floor.

"When I came out of my fainting-fit, my mother and "sisters were standing over me, with anxiety and alarm "depicted upon their countenances. I was carried to "my bed, when I soon recovered perfect consciousness.

"'What a horrid calamity,' I thought, 'had befallen "me.' But the reality proved a thousand times greater "than I could have imagined it. I loved Herbert so "well, that under his gentle and loving influence I "should have learned the value of principle, and for his "sake loved truth, and by and by have loved it for its "own sake, and so have escaped the awful doom which, "since I lost him, has been mine. Words are utterly "inadequate to describe the cruel anguish that wrung my "heart, as I lay upon my bed, bathing my pillow with "tears. What was the world to me now? What were "friends, home, pleasures, life? How earnestly I prayed "for death to come and deliver me from my woes!

"As soon as I could gain courage I read the re-"mainder of the letter, which only served to add poig-"nancy to my already intense sufferings; you will not "be surprised that it should have had that effect.

"DEAR MARY: Herbert is dead and buried; he died night before "last, and was buried to-day, at three o'clock. O, Mary! how "*could* you write that terrible letter? Were you mad? I cannot "realize it, it is so like a dark and troubled dream. I thought you "passionately loved him; but when I read that fatal *letter*, I was "bewildered. When Herbert read it, he could scarcely believe his "own eyes; but there it was before him, and why should he doubt? "Would to God he had doubted! That night, he told me, before he "died, was one of fearful agony, in which passion, anger, grief, "hatred, revenge, despair, jealousy, made him their sport, as devils "may be supposed to sport with the spirits of the damned! In the "morning, so terribly had he changed, that a physician was sent for,

"and when he came he said the attack had been so sudden, and the "progress of the disease so rapid, there was but little hope of his "recovery. * * * *

"In his delirium he called wildly for you, and then reproached "you for your cruelty. I conversed with him in his lucid moments, "but he would talk only of you. He commissioned me to give you "his full and free pardon for the injury you had done him. O, "Mary! how wildly he loved you, and what a heart you have "lost! * * * *

"Did I weep when I read this? No, for I could not "weep. Had tears fallen, they should have been tears "of fire, like those which burnt into my breast, or tears "of blood, such as were falling from my heart!

"You have suffered, and suffered bitterly, Henri, I "well know; but you have never known the anguish I "experienced *then*, and you never *can* know it. With "few exceptions, man never loves with such fearful in- "tensity as woman; Herbert was an exception, and that "was one reason why I loved him so well.

"I wrote to Amanda, to send me the letter; she "complied without delay. You may judge of my sur- "prise when I found that the writing seemed like my "own; so much so, that those best acquainted with my "hand would have been deceived. I read the super- "scription when my father held the letter in his hand; "but I was so much agitated that I did not notice the "character of the writing. I knew at a glance that my "sister Ellen had written it; we had, for a number of

"years, been taught by the same master; and, observ-
"ing how much our hands were alike, we wrote after
"the same copies, until no one but ourselves could detect
"the difference. We frequently wrote articles to puzzle
"our friends, and had many a hearty laugh at the mis-
"takes they made, when they decided, after a close
"scrutiny, which of us was the writer. Alas! I did
"not dream, then, that this innocent deception, which
"served so well for a pleasant pastime, should rob me
"of what I held most dear, and be the bane of my life!
"When at school, Ellen and I often wrote in each other's
"books, and our teacher did not detect us. She had
"written the letter to Herbert, and I had signed my
"name to it. When I subsequently questioned her
"about it, she said that my father brought it to her,
"and bade her copy it, which she had done, not
"knowing who Herbert Bending was, nor what was
"the object of the letter; she thought it a very strange
"affair, but she asked no questions, and did as father
"bade her. But you will wish to see the letter; I want
"you to see it. Read it, Henri, *read* it; and then
"marvel, if you can, that it drove me mad!

"SIR: As I am about to return home with my father, it is time
"that the *farce* should end. You have professed to love me, and no
"doubt you do; but you must have been a weak thing to suppose
"that I loved you. Don't call me hard-hearted, now; for when a
"young man, who is little better than a *beggar*, presumes to love a
"gentleman's daughter, it is right that she should teach the puppy

"his place. You remember the proverb, 'Bought wit is very good,
"if you do not buy it too dear.' You have paid for what you have
"bought, in love; bah! so the debt is fully cancelled, and you may
"consider yourself *free*.

"Do you marvel that I could have manifested so much love, and
"possessed none, but, instead thereof, contempt? You are older
"than I, but, sir, you have less experience. I have seen men, and
"women too, make love in the drama, and the objects to whom they
"offered their adoration they despised. And yet, how *well* they
"loved, — how *ardently, passionately!* The *wise* see through it all;
"the *fools* weep! My dear sir, to which party do *you* belong? I
"hope not to the *latter!* O, did I not play well the part of the silly,
"love-sick maid? And you, sir, acted admirably! From my heart
"I wish you had been *wiser;* but you are wiser than you *were*, or
"you *will be* when you get *this*. O, the blissful moments! Will
"they *never* return again? Alas! my charming Herbert, I fear
"they never will. I know you will feel badly, but it cannot be
"helped. *My* husband is already chosen; and, knowing my true
"position in the world, I have not chosen a low *churl!*

"Good-by, sir, and remember to profit by the *lesson I have taught*
"*you!* MARY J. FLANDERS.

"This was the parting adieu to the one I loved better
"than life. How I cursed myself for my fatal impru-
"dence! — but I did not dream, then, that my father could
"do so foul a thing. The terrible thought now came
"heavy and crushing upon me, that I was Herbert's
"murderer! O, horror! I was the assassin of him
"whom I loved with a devotion that words cannot ex-
"press. The thought palsied my brain, drove the blood
"back upon my heart, and made me mad! My mouth

"was parched with burning heat, my eyes seemed fire,
"and a tongue of flame was lapping the blood of the
"murdered affections!

"'Why was I ever born?' I cried; 'O, cursed,
"thrice cursed be the hour! Happiness, peace, joy,
"light, farewell! Go, spirits of beauty, that have min-
"istered to me so long! — go, I need you not now! Grief,
"sorrow, remorse, agony, ye shall be my guardian
"angels! Darkness, your great wings, which are as
"wide as the universe, they shall shelter me! Love!
"get ye hence, and never approach me again! Hatred,
"bitterness, revenge, come to me, and ye shall be my
"servants, — my loving, faithful, obedient servants!
"Father, I hate ye! I hate ye as damned spirits hate
"devils! O, I could see you suffer agony a thousand-
"fold greater and more horrid than mine, and laugh,—
"ay, laugh with joy, wild and unutterable joy! Sister,
"as ye have joined in this plot against me, which has
"made shipwreck of all my hopes, leaving life a dark
"and troubled sea, without one gleam of light, without
"one star to shine upon me, I detest you! Mother!
"that name once dear! — if ye were in the plot, I
"repel you from my presence, as I would a poisonous
"reptile!'

"Thus I raved in my agony, until my voice grew so
"loud and wild that my mother and sisters rushed to
"my room with affright. Their presence called me to

"myself; my looks were such that they regarded me "with astonishment. When they asked what ailed me, "I pointed them to the letter; it was a relief to learn "that they were not guilty.

"I have said that this letter drove me mad, and it was "true; not that I became a maniac, but I was fearfully "changed. There was ever a strange feeling in my head "and heart, and I was often tempted to put an end to "my miserable existence. I was closely watched, lest I "should do so. My father's presence was agony to me; "but where could I go to escape it? I could neither "read, write nor study, nor find consolation in society. "Some of the time I was excessively stupid, and again "my brain was intensely active. I then realized, for the "first time, although I did not profit by it, how much "evil a lack of principle may cause, and how much it "had wrought out for me. If I had been as faithful to "truth and right as Herbert ever was, he never would "have believed, for an instant, that that most fiendish "letter came from my brain or heart. I had witnessed "so much of his devotedness to principle, that, had I "received a thousand letters under similar circum- "stances, I could not have believed that they were *really* "from him. Alas! he had witnessed so much deception "in me, that it was not strange he believed me capable "of such atrocious conduct.

"He once caught me in a falsehood; and many times

"have I thought how painful was the expression that "lingered upon his manly face. I doubt not but that "his declaration of love was delayed, through fear that "his happiness would not be safe in my hands. I won- "der not that he should have had such thoughts. And "there were times — though it gives me pain, even now, "to think of them — when I took delight in tormenting "him; and I indulged in them the more, because I "knew that he was devotedly attached to me. At par- "ties I slighted him, and received marked attentions "from others, when I knew that it caused deep agony in "his heart. But, even then, I loved him better than life. "After his declaration of love I was more careful; but "I inflicted slight wounds after that, for no other pur- "pose than to gratify my evil propensities, and to make "him feel my power. I knew that he madly loved me; "therefore I was not so fearful of losing him as I should "otherwise have been. I doubt not he thought of all "these things when he read that fatal note. My own "wickedness had caused him to believe a lie, and "destroyed his life and my happiness.

"Never was the nature of a human being more in- "tensely embittered than was mine by this fatal blow. God "knows that I should have been bad enough, at best, but "not so wicked as I have been. Under the influence of "Herbert, which was every day increasing in strength, my "impassioned being would have had its energies directed

"in a different channel, and I should have been a bless-
"ing to myself and to others. But, through the atrocious
"baseness of my father, and my own lack of truth, Her-
"bert's life was destroyed, and I was left in form a
"woman, but in heart a devil! Every day was spent
"in misery, and in sharpening all my senses, that I might
"have greater hatred in my heart than I ever could have
"had of love.

"At last, I was introduced to your father, and told
"that he was the man selected for my husband. Under
"other circumstances, it is possible that I might have loved
"him, though I do not think that we were ever adapted
"to each other; but, at least, I could have treated him as
"a woman should an honorable man who sues for her
"hand; but now my first impulse was to reject him, with
"scorn. The second thought, that he was the cause of
"all my misery, and I would marry him to make him
"unhappy. I gave him my hand, while hatred was in
"my heart. The result was what I prayed for; he was
"wretched, and my father was ashamed of me. When
"children were born, I should have loved not only them,
"but their father; but I fancied he had wrought me a
"great wrong, and I could not forgive or love. You,
"Henri, resembled him most, and the consequence was
"I loved you least. If I had studied your father's
"heart, I should have dearly loved all the children, and
"treated him well; but I did not know it *then*. I know

"that I was not in my right mind, or I should not have "been so blind. I supposed he had bargained for me, "as one would bargain for a horse; and the thought made "me detest him.

"After he died, I became alarmed, at a protracted "meeting, as it was called, for my soul's salvation. I "supposed your father was lost, and I had no desire to "follow him. Your father believed differently from most "men, and this I thought enough to prove his eternal "ruin. He thought that all souls would finally be puri- "fied. That they would suffer here for sin, and suffer "hereafter, but ultimately be redeemed.

"Deacon Webber, hearing that I was anxious for my "eternal welfare, called upon me often; and, instead of "sitting at Jesus' feet, and learning of him, I learned of "Deacon Webber,—and you know what a holy woman it "made me. After his wife died, he offered his hand in "marriage, saying that it might prove the salvation of "the whole family, who were living without hope and with- "out God in the world. I did not believe that my chil- "dren would be benefited; but Deacon Webber was "highly honored in the church, and I was about to join "it, and, should I become his wife, I should receive "marked attention. In spite of the remonstrances of my "children, and to my shame and sorrow, I married him. "I have found him to be a cruel, vile, lascivious. sordid "hypocrite! I now shudder when I am called Mrs. Web-

"ber; but I will not complain, for it is meet that I "should suffer for the wrong which your father received "at my hands.

"A year ago, I was looking over some things that "were your father's, and I found his diary. I did not "know that he kept one. Curiosity prompted me to "read it. I had not gone through many pages before I "blistered them with my tears. I learned that the man "I had so fearfully injured was a good man, and in "marrying me had acted from the purest motives. He "loved me when he first saw me, and my father had told "him that his love was returned. He waited until I was "eighteen, and offered himself in marriage, and was "accepted, not doubting but that he had my love. In "one of the library drawers you will find the journal. "Read it, and you will learn how wretched was his "married life. My heart bleeds when I think of "it. Many of the pages are stained with the tears "which dropped upon them while he penned his bur-"dened thoughts.

"The perusal of those pages caused me renewed suf-"fering, but they did me good. They softened and "purified my hard and blackened heart. They dissi-"pated the mists of error, and of madness! Things "appeared, O, so different! But, before I found the "journal of your father I had been made to see the "fearful enormities of my life, and I felt deeply sorrow-

"ful for my many sins. A sick bed had not been in "vain, neither had the cruel treatment of Deacon Web- "ber. I often contrasted his life with that of your "father; and thought how kind the latter would have "been to me, if I had manifested as much regard for him "as I had for the former. The thought of the abuse I "had heaped upon him, the injustice with which I had "treated you, and that poor little girl, Helen Means, "made me very unhappy; but I felt that it was good for "me that I should suffer thus, and I prayed my God "that he would sanctify these sufferings to my good, and "that, through them and his mercy, I might be regen- "erated.

"Of all the children, I wronged you the most. The "reason of this was, because you were so hot-tempered; "and because your father always took your part, and "manifested, I thought, more affection for you than for "the other children; and because you so much resembled "him. With my changed views and feelings, I know that "I love you dearly. I fear that you despise your "mother; but still, I want to see you, more than words "can tell. I have often thought of writing, but have not "the courage. I dare not hope that you will ever love "me; but, when you read this, your hatred will not "be increased, and you will pity me. My sands are "almost run, and I hope soon to be in a better world.

"When I am gone, love your brothers and sisters,— be "united and happy. Now, my dear boy, receive the "parting blessing of your dying mother. In heaven I "will meet you, where we shall no more hate, but always "love. MARY JANE EATON."

CHAPTER XXII.

HOPES NOT REALIZED.

I READ this narrative of wrong and suffering with an interest the most profound. Some parts of it caused tears to start from my eyes, and course rapidly down my cheeks. I was not sorry that she had left me this painful history, for it empowered me, after serious thought, to perceive her character in its true light. As I could see all the influences which had combined so powerfully to make her what she was, I had more charity for her, and I felt there was more to love or compassionate, and less to censure. Our friends and relatives, when they had heard these confessions, and candidly weighed them in the balance of reason and justice, confessed they could not have come to correct conclusions without them. Their opinions were changed and softened, and pity for her unhappy lot was mingled with feelings of disapproval of her conduct.

I am aware that the hasty reader may come to a very different conclusion, and not think so well of her as he did before reading her confessions; but this would be unjust.

I will briefly place the whole subject, in all its essential bearings, clearly and plainly before the reader. My mother inherited from her parents a morally defective organization, and her education made the matter worse. She was naturally wilful and cunning, and could keep her thoughts and intentions to herself; and was inclined to work in secret, when she could best accomplish her object. She was very passionate, and often allowed her temper to triumph over her better judgment. She lacked principle, and her father's example increased the evil. She had an exalted opinion of herself, and esteemed too lightly the opinions of others. Now, as she was not lacking in benevolence, and had large intellectual powers, a keen imagination, an intense love of the beautiful and sublime, had she been educated under more favorable influences, she would have been a very different being,—she would have been guided, usually, by the superior faculties of her mind, and so her character would have been almost the opposite from what it was.

Her early training was not conducive to the development of her better nature; and the outrageous deception, and the fearful blasting of her cherished hopes, embittered her whole being, called the lower faculties into active exercise, and deadened her nobler impulses. She was left in a state which may be justly considered moral insanity. This view of the subject, though defective, I believe to be substantially correct. Sinful propensities

were inherited, transferred from parent to child, and unpropitious circumstances combined to strengthen and give them the control; and, though the result is to be deprecated, it could not well have been otherwise. It was these, and similar considerations, which caused us all to change our opinions which we had long held in relation to my mother, and view her character from a different stand-point.

I found, in this matter, food for reflection, which I required, and which did me good. I thought my own course would have been very different, if I had known my mother better,— known of her sufferings, disappointments and wrongs. Could I have seen her heart unveiled, and had a clear understanding of the causes which made it what it was, I should have had more charity.

I fear that we often heap reproaches upon people, and treat them with insult and contempt, when, could we know all, we should commiserate their unfortunate lot, and strive to make them happier, rather than render them more wretched. Instead of looking, with truth-seeking eyes, to learn the causes of wrong-doing, we jump at conclusions, and judge the offender worthy of naught but stripes and death, forgetting that, had the same circumstances surrounded us, we should have been as bad, and perhaps worse. We show but little mercy to the criminal, though he may be the victim of circumstances beyond his control. If society, by laws, manners and customs,

educates men for crime, we punish them none the less severely. We feel that justice should be done, "though the heavens fall;" and yet are guilty of the worst species of injustice ourselves. It is so with society in general; it is so with individuals.

My mother's confessions I read to all our friends and relatives, that they might view her character through the clear medium of unvarnished truth. I was happy to find that it changed and softened the opinions and feelings of all.

It was now the first month in summer,— the month of roses, bright days, sweet zephyrs and clear skies. I have always loved June, very, very much. When is the earth so beautiful, the air so fragrant, and the sunbeams so golden and delightful? What gorgeous robes the trees put on,— robes of greenest leaves and brightly-tinted flowers,

"Till the whole forest stands displayed
In full luxuriance to the sighing gales,
* * * * * *
"———— the country far diffused around
One boundless blush, one white empurpled shower
Of mingled blossoms, where the raptured eye
Hurries from joy to joy, ————." *

Such is June in New England, and hence it is the most beautiful month in all the year. In this description the latter part of May should be included.

* Thomson.

More than twelve months had passed since I had parted from Helen Means, leaving her in tears. Since my return, a thousand things had prevented my visiting her. The longer I delayed, the more impatient I grew; for I was anxious to hear from her own sweet lips that she loved me.

Everything being now arranged, so that I could spend as much time at my uncle's as I might desire, I set off, with high hopes of speedily winning and wearing the brightest gem which earth or heaven contained for me. A few hours' ride brought me to the long-wished-for goal. My feelings now became warm and excited, and I rushed impetuously into the house, supposing, of course, that Helen would fly to my arms, and hold me in a passionate embrace. I knew she would, if she felt as I did.

Hearing the piano, I bent my steps to the parlor, and there, as I expected and desired, was Helen, alone. She was playing a beautiful tune, and so absorbed in the music that she did not observe me when I entered the room. I stood for a moment, and gazed upon her in mingled admiration and surprise. One year had changed her very much. She was now a beautiful woman, with her pure, elevated soul looking out of her eyes, beaming from her countenance.

I thought I would approach her unobserved. She heard my step, looked around and saw me; but, instead of rushing into my arms, she arose from her seat very deliber-

ately, extending me her hand, bidding me welcome home again. She seemed perfectly calm, except that she became paler, her lip quivered a little, and her hand slightly trembled. She was paler, I noticed, as she sat at the piano, than when I had last seen her, and about her eyes was the sad look of her childhood. It lay there, as the shadow of death lies upon the face of a lovely cherub child, not marring but softening the tints of its light and beauty.

"Welcome home again, Henri!" she said; "I am very happy to see you. Your health is good, I hope."

I was not prepared for this stoical coolness, and, for the first time in my life, I felt at a loss what to do or say.

"My health is — very good. You look pale. Are you not well?"

"I am not so healthy as I was a year ago; but hope to be, a year hence."

"Yes — so do I, — I mean — that I hope you will be well soon."

"We have beautiful weather now; it was delightful when you left us, a year ago. But June is more beautiful than May."

"The weather is more beautiful, I think; but I fear — that — you — we have changed too."

"Most likely. But do you mean that we have changed for the better? Was it *May* then with our hearts, and is it *June* now?"

"I fear not, unless June is much colder than May. I do not like the change; for there is more of shadow, and less of sunlight."

"We can judge more correctly when we learn what effect new scenes have had upon you. New York, I am told, is a bad place for a young man."

"Helen!"

"Nay, do not be alarmed. I think you have too much principle to do anything very vicious; but we are all liable to err when we are surrounded by temptations."

"Helen, how you have changed!"

"So have you."

"But not as you have."

"I suppose not. A year changes us all; but the change in each one is not general, but individual."

"I did not mean that."

"Then you must explain, or I cannot get at your meaning."

"I will do so. Your friendly regards and feelings for me have changed."

"O, no! they never were stronger than they are at this moment. And when I thought that marriage would end those sweet relations which had existed between us for so many years, I prayed as ardently for your happiness as I ever had done."

"But marriage can never end them."

"Circumstances have already changed them, as you

well know; and at some future time marriage may annihilate them."

"No, no, Helen! I will never marry, unless I marry ——"

"Your uncle and aunt are in the library. Come, let me introduce you to them; they will be rejoiced to see you."

"Not now, Helen; I would talk with you longer. I was about to say ——"

"You will stay with us many weeks, I hope, and there will be plenty of time for pleasant chat,— come." And she led the way to the library, and I could do no less than follow her.

This was a reception I had not dreamed of, and it was some days before I could summon sufficient courage to approach again the delicate subject. After repeatedly urgent requests, she consented to take a walk with me to visit our old familiar haunts. It was a beautiful summer evening, and the sun was just sinking to his rest. Not a cloud was in the sky, and everything was hushed into stillness. She provokingly refused to take my arm, preferring, as she said, to walk alone, being so much accustomed to it. We wandered from spot to spot, where we had often been before; and, as we conversed of those dear old times, reserve and coldness seemed to leave us, and we were to each other what we had been. She was again my own Helen; and when I took her arm and

placed it within mine, she made no resistance, but seemed pleased to have it there.

We walked on, until we came to the dearest spot of all. It was at the foot of a green hill, where a limpid stream of water flowed down its sides, and made beautiful all the valley below. Here was a very large rock, some fifty feet high. It was solid granite. At its base, fronting the valley, was a niche, so designed as to make a convenient seat for two. It had the appearance of having been formed by the hand of man. In front of this seat were a number of maple-trees, a few rods apart, in the form of a half-circle. The brook leaped down at one side of the rock, wound around it near its base, also in the form of a circle; it then turned again, passed by the trees, and formed another circle beyond them. Between the rock and brook, brook and trees, and brook again, was an undulating surface, covered with green grass and beautiful flowers. Here the winds made music in the trees; here the stream made music as it leaped from the hill and rock; here the flowers smiled, and loaded the frolicsome breezes with fragrance.

I seated Helen, and took my place by her side. My arm was around her as of yore, and one of her hands was clasped in mine. We talked long of the good old times, when we were seldom apart, and life seemed like a rosy dream. We spoke of the time that we were separated,— of the events which then transpired. I made

bold to speak of Irene Dinneford; and, at Helen's request, described her person, manners, accomplishments, mind and heart. I gave her a brief account of our first acquaintance, our succeeding interviews, my rescuing her in the moment of peril, our engagement and its close. Helen listened attentively, and remarked, when I had done,

"She must be a beautiful girl, Henri; and I wonder how you could so readily have given her up!"

"She did not truly love me, Helen," I replied; "and I did not love her with that devotion which is requisite for one constituted as I am."

"I am surprised that you did not love her! And she is to be married soon, you say?"

"Yes, and to one who is worthy of her. They are two noble spirits, and love each other with undying affection."

"Their life will be happy, then. You ought to be thankful that you found out, before too late, what her true feelings were."

"I *am* thankful, Helen; but, if I had not, I do not think I could have married her."

"Under the circumstances, I cannot see how it could have been prevented. You were solemnly engaged to her, and also engaged in partnership with her father; and the wedding-day was fixed, and close at hand. When

I get entangled thus, I am very sure that it will result in marriage."

"I should have found some way of escape, for I knew that my whole heart was elsewhere!"

"You mean that some one else had won it, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"If you had said that some other person had a part of your heart, I could have believed you; but, when a young man voluntarily enters into an engagement with a lady, and, on that account, makes business arrangements which are distasteful to him, and not influenced in the least by the expectation of obtaining wealth, I cannot believe that any other being has all his heart."

"But you do not think that I had given it all to Irene?"

"O, no. She had a part, and somebody else a part; and perhaps there was a third or fourth, to share in the coveted treasure!"

"You are joking, now."

"Not by any means; for I believe every word I have said."

"Do you not think it possible for a man to love a woman — some cherished one — very dearly, and not realize it? And could he not pledge himself to another, whom he greatly admired; and, after that, for the first time become aware of the fact that the former had his heart, and not the latter?"

"I can imagine such a case, but I cannot appreciate that kind of love.

"And would not be thankful for its manifestation?"

"Certainly not, for I should wish for something better."

"If one who loved you should do as I have, how could he satisfy you of whole-souled, devoted love?"

"That is a difficult question to answer."

"I should not suppose it very difficult."

"Different persons would view the matter in a different light; — but shall we not return? — the evening grows damp."

"It is not very damp, and it is so warm the falling dew will not prove injurious. Don't let us go yet, for I have not said half that I wish to."

"We can talk on our way home."

"But it is very pleasant sitting here."

"Yes, and it is very pleasant rambling about, when the moon shines so beautifully."

"I would rather sit still and talk, when the subject so comes home to the heart."

"And I would not, on such a night as this."

"You think, then, that one could not gain your love, if he had offered himself to another?"

"Perhaps so, and perhaps not," she said, rising from her seat. "I am for having a dance with the brook.

How softly it sings and talks! Maybe it is making love to the flowers."

"I wish it would teach me to make love."

"Perhaps it will, if you ask it to."

"What shall I say to it?"

"Say what you please; I cannot be your teacher."

"Will you interpret its answers?"

"O, no! — why should I?"

"Because you are better acquainted with its language than I am."

"How did you learn that fact, admitting it to be one?"

"I took the privilege of a Yankee, and guessed. Besides, I knew that from a child you loved all things which were beautiful, and understood their language."

"I am well learned, then. But I am quite anxious to hear you talk to the little sparkling drops that go leaping and dancing over the rocks. Sometimes I think they clap their hands for joy."

"Your imagination is active, to-night. But I will try and gratify you. 'Most beautiful water-spirits, ye who coquet all day with the sunbeams, who leap down the hillsides, and move gently through the valleys,— who sing so sweetly your evening songs, making love to the flowers, forming yourselves into a mirror for the moon and stars, — teach me, ye bright angels, how to gain the heart of the one I love — '"

I was here interrupted by a loud laugh from Helen.

"That was capital," she said, "and so poetical! The water-spirits ought to feel flattered. But they will not tell you; for they would be afraid that, by the time you had gained it, you would be in love with somebody else."

"You are a cruel girl!"

"O, no, Henri; not a bit cruel. But hark! the bell is ringing nine; it is time to go home."

"I would rather stay longer, but will do as you say."

On our way home we talked upon various subjects, but I could not gain courage sufficient to offer her my hand and heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TWICE REJECTED.

WHEN we had arrived at the house, Helen went to her room, and I to the parlor; where I found uncle, aunt, and a young man whom they introduced as Mr. Gray. A few commonplace remarks were made, and we were relapsing into silence, when Helen came in. She appeared very glad to see Mr. Gray, and took a seat by his side; and they were soon absorbed in a conversation — carried on in an undertone — that nobody could understand but themselves. I sat and looked on with feelings more easily imagined than described. I was really jealous, and wished Mr. Gray anywhere but there. It was bad enough to find Helen's feelings so different from what I had expected; but to meet with a rival so soon, and be obliged to endure his presence, while he appropriated Helen entirely to himself, was too much. I was as unhappy as I could reasonably be.

They conversed for some thirty minutes together, and then we entered into a general conversation. I was anxious to find him a fool, for I thought she could not love a man without good sense. His remarks convinced

me that he was not a fool, and neither was he very intelligent. I was certain that he was far beneath Helen, and this gave me a vast deal of satisfaction. At his request, Helen played and sang; and he took the liberty to stand near her, select the music and turn over the leaves, with which she seemed well pleased. When she relinquished her seat, my uncle desired Mr. Gray to occupy it; and he complied with the request, and played very beautifully. "At least," thought I, "there is one thing about him which will be attractive to Helen,— his love of music."

I remained until after ten o'clock; and, as Mr. Gray did not manifest any intentions of going, and fearing that my room was preferable to my company, I bade them good-night, and went to my chamber. It was between eleven and twelve when he took his departure. I was then too jealous and miserable to expect to sleep, if I sought my bed; so I remained up long enough to compose the following lines, which I insert, not because of their poetical merit, but because they serve to show the state of my mind at that time. A very little thing made me jealous, and fearful that Helen had given her heart to another.

I know a glad and beautiful maiden,
Who warbles a bird-like glee;
And when my heart is wearily laden,
She sings her songs to me;

I clasp her hand — her eyes meet mine,
Till my cheeks with tears are wet ;
I bask in smiles that seem divine, —
And her I would forget !

By her side I 've sat when fleeting hours
Were full of heaven to me,
And thought the blest in Eden's bowers
Not half so happy as we ;
I never knew such rapturous bliss
Till thus our souls had met,
I wished no greater joy than this, —
And her I would forget !

I love this glad and beautiful maiden,
Who warbles a bird-like glee,
And fancy I dwell in blissful Aidenn
When she sings her songs to me.
Her angel-face, bewitching eyes,
Have all my thoughts beset,
More beautiful than starry skies, —
And her I would forget !

How long I 've prayed that she might love me ! —
Alas ! my prayers are vain;
My lot is dark, like skies above me,
That lower with storm and rain ;
I 've loved her as I 've loved no other, —
'T is useless, sad regret,
She loves me not, but loves another, —
And her I would forget !

After I had finished the above, I retired ; but it was nearly morning before I fell asleep, and then I dreamed

that Helen was married to Mr. Gray. I fancied that I saw her standing at the altar, looking too beautiful to unite her fate to a mortal. While a sweet, angelic smile played upon her countenance, she gave her hand to Mr. Gray, and was lost to me forever.

My agitation was so great, that I awoke,— and I was so happy to find it a dream! The sun was just rising from his ocean bed, as I arose and dressed myself, and sat down by the open window, to let the fresh air cool my fevered brow. As I sat surveying the beautiful scene which lay before me, I espied Helen returning from a morning walk, in company with Mr. Gray.

Reader, you may think it a little thing; you may think that I was very silly; but the first glance of them caused a pang to shoot through my heart, bitter as death. My suspicions that he was her accepted lover were now confirmed, and the thought was agony. "If it is so," I said, "let me die, for there is no more joy for me!" I tried to despise her for loving one so much her inferior, and to persuade myself that, were he her equal, I could bear to see her love and marry him. When they had arrived within a few rods of the house, they bade each other good-morning, and he walked hastily towards the village. I went down stairs, and met her at the door.

"Good-morning," she said, in a sprightly tone.

"Good-morning," I replied; "you walk early."

"I do, occasionally; but no earlier than we used to ramble, before you went to New York."

"I suppose your morning walks are more pleasant than they were then."

"What makes you think so?"

"Present appearances."

"They are not more pleasant, Henri; and I don't expect them to be, for they were very pleasant then."

"I am glad to hear you say so. But who is this Mr. Gray, who seems to be so very attentive?"

"Why, Mr. Gray, to be sure."

"I was aware of that fact. But where is he from? — what is his business? — how long have you been acquainted with him?"

"He is my music-teacher, a distant relative of Mrs. Stewart's; and came into the country from Boston, early in the spring, for his health."

"And does he not hold any other relation to you than that of a teacher of music?"

"I trust he does."

"I thought as much."

"He is my friend, Henri, and I hope he may be yours."

"Your lover, you mean."

"No, not a lover."

"Do you speak truly?"

"He has never formally proposed."

"But will soon?"

"I do not know."

"What do you think?"

"I think he has no such thought or intention."

"What should you say, if he did?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know, Helen?"

"How should I, when I do not anticipate any such result? But what foolish questions you are asking me, this morning! I shall not answer any more."

"I think I shall go home to-day."

"So soon? You cannot be in earnest. Why, you have but just arrived. You must not go to-day. Come, look more cheerful, and say that you will stay a good long time."

"I cannot promise you, Helen; but, if you wish it, I will not go to-day."

"Nor to-morrow neither?"

"Nor to-morrow."

"Now you talk like yourself. I shall not let you go at present, I warrant you."

"Why not?"

"I cannot spare you."

"I should suppose you might."

"And there you are mistaken. Why, you have been absent more than a year!"

"O, Helen, I could stay forever, if you bade me!"

"Then I shall use my authority not to keep you forever; for you have other friends, and it would be unjust, — but long enough, at least, to learn what effect New York society has had upon you."

"Don't mention New York, for I hate the sound."

"Well, I will not, if you so desire. But I fear you have grown irritable in your absence."

"I fear I shall."

"But I shall not allow it."

"You can prevent it."

"Can I? Then I shall do so. But I must not stand and talk with you longer now, or you will miss those warm biscuits at breakfast you once liked so much."

So saying, she darted in to her work, while I went to a walk, to indulge in not very pleasant reflections.

I thought how different Helen appeared now to what she did when I left her, a year ago. She must have changed more than I. I blamed myself for ever having thought of marrying another, and wondered how I could have been so mad. It was only for a moment that I thought of returning home; and I had not parted many minutes from Helen, before I was sorry that I had said anything about it. But it was some comfort to have her urge me to stay. It gave me a little bit of hope.

Mr. Gray came in the afternoon, and gave her a lesson in music. At her request, I was present. A few days after, he came, stopped to tea, and spent the evening.

Helen occupied so much of the time with him in conversation, that, when I left them, at ten, I was so unhappy, and so jealous, that I could not control my feelings, and walked my chamber, pouring execrations upon the unoffending Gray. They had appeared happy; but what a wretched evening had it been to me! I again thought of returning home. Mr. Gray remained but a few moments after I had retired.

In the morning I was little disposed to take my leave. I could not bear the thought of being away from Helen, lest somebody else should win her. It was happiness to be near her, though she gave me little reason to hope that I might ultimately gain her heart. Every day I had the same feelings, until three weeks had passed away, and I was apparently no nearer the attainment of my wishes than when I first came. She appeared friendly, and manifested a sisterly regard for me,—nothing more. Sometimes I could with difficulty control my feelings. I wanted to clasp her in my arms, and call her my own.

We frequently spent part of the evening alone, and, more than once, I had made up my mind to ask her to give me her heart and hand; but, before I could bring sufficient courage to my aid, we were interrupted by the entrance of uncle and aunt, or that hated Gray.

Many of my readers have been placed in similar circumstances, and so they can appreciate my feelings. The

one you loved best was near you, and you had summoned sufficient courage to take one of her hands; and, although it struggled a little for freedom, you held on to it. In this situation you had talked of various things, approaching gradually that subject which interested you most of all; but, whenever you had come almost to it, when the way was fairly opened for a declaration of love, the whole thing looked so presumptuous and doubtful, that you would sit in silence for a time, and then you would go back and begin again. By such evolutions your courage was at last screwed up to the sticking point, when the door opened, and in walked the father or mother, or some other equally unwelcome visitor. This was exactly my case, for more than once; but my time came finally.

On the evening of the fifth of July we were alone, and there was no one to interrupt us. We conversed upon various subjects, but principally of romance and poetry. She had lately read a volume of Motherwell, and was in raptures with it. She handed it to me, and requested me to read aloud. I did so, choosing those pieces which would best convey the passionate emotions of my own heart, such as, "O, Agony! Keen Agony!" "The Night's Song," &c.

My whole heart was in the sentiment of the author, and I read with feeling and pathos such lines as the following:

"O, agony! fierce agony!
For loving heart to brook,
In one brief hour, the withering power
Of unimpassioned look!

"O, agony! deep agony!
For heart that 's proud and high,
To learn of fate how desolate
It may be ere it die!"

"Endearing! Endearing!
Why so endearing
Are those dark, lustrous eyes,
Through their silk fringes peering?
They love me! they love me!
Deeply, — sincerely;
And, more than aught else on earth,
I love them dearly.

"Endearing! endearing!
Why so endearing
Glows the glad sunny smile,
On thy soft cheek appearing?
It brightens! it brightens!
As I am nearing;
And 't is thus that thy fond smile
Is ever endearing."

As I read on, throwing more of heart and soul into each poem, Helen became wholly swallowed up in the thoughts and feelings expressed. Her eyes glowed with that enrapturing spiritual beauty which partakes more

of heaven than earth; her cheeks were flushed, and her bosom heaved with deep emotion. I paused, and looked at her, spell-bound. We sat some moments motionless as statues, gazing into each other's eyes, which seemed gushing with burning words, while our tongues were paralyzed with hope and fear. Presently she turned her head, and burst into tears. I felt that now was the time to learn my fate; and I caught hold of her hands, and exclaimed, "O, Helen, this is too much! Suspense is agony, and I cannot bear it! I love you, Helen,—I love only you; and now you cannot, will not, refuse to make me happy!"

With a sad expression upon her face, and withdrawing her hands from mine, she said:

"Henri, I wish—I am sorry for this! If anything that I have done has caused you to make this declaration, I ask your pardon; I did not intend it, nor wish it."

"Why are you sorry? It is not right for you to regret it; and, if you consult your own heart, it will tell you so. I cannot doubt but that its emotions respond to mine."

"Nay, Henri, you flatter yourself too much!"

"Your words are cruel as the grave; they cannot be true, for I believe that you love me."

"I hope you will rest satisfied, then."

"But I would rather hear it from your own lips."

"You would not have me utter that which is false?"

"No; but you cannot mean that it would be false. O, Helen! do not keep me in suspense, but tell me at once that you will gratify the dearest and most sacred wishes of my heart!"

I paused for a reply, but she uttered not a word; her head was resting upon her hand, as if in deep thought.

"How shall I interpret this silence, Helen? Give me but one word, one look, one sign that I am beloved, and I will be satisfied!"

She remained silent, and I was about to clasp her to my heart, when she said,

"Henri, this scene is very painful to me, and I wish, for the happiness of both, that it had not occurred. Whenever I say to any being 'I love you,' those words will be most sacred, most holy, and they will never be recalled; but, should I say them to you now, I might have cause to take them back."

"*Never*, Helen, for you would have my whole heart in exchange for yours! You do love me, dearest?"

"I have not told you so, and it is possible for you to be mistaken."

"No, no' I cannot be! I am convinced, by that sweet, entrancing glance that was fixed upon me but just now, that your heart must be mine, for I read its thoughts and emotions in your eyes. Then do not con-

tinue my unhappiness, by refusing to confess a truth which will fill my breast with rapture!"

"If my heart has made this confession, you need not to learn it again; spoken language is less expressive than the language of the heart and eye."

"But tell me if I have read this language aright?"

"After what I have already said to you, Henri, you must be your own judge."

"Helen, can I be satisfied with this?"

"You must."

"I cannot, will not, be satisfied! But perhaps there is a prior engagement? You love Mr. Gray!"

"You have no right to say that!"

I was now growing jealous, and my thoughts were very bitter.

"You love him, I know you do!" I exclaimed, in an excited tone. "You love one who is not your equal; and you will marry him, and end our friendship forever!"

"This from you, Henri?"

"Reject a heart, if you will, that beats only for you; and then be happy, if you can! Marry Gray, if you are so disposed, and then see how you will feel when you learn, as you must, that he is far beneath you! Do not think to retain my love, friendship or respect, then; for you shall not have them!"

I paused, and gazed upon her face; it was like marble

in whiteness, and her eyes were fixed upon me as though astounded by the words I had uttered. Their strange expression caused me to reflect upon the import of my language. She seemed to instinctively recoil from me. I was just ready to apologize, when she arose and said:

"Mr. Eaton!" — she had never called me Mr. before — "I would not have believed you could have talked thus to me! I have been deceived in you! Know you that I consider you unworthy of my love!"

Those last words made me angry, and my reply only widened the breach.

"I am equal to Mr. Gray, I think, and I trust I am not inferior to you. I am not surprised, now, that it was so easy a matter for you to reject me!"

"Say no more, or I shall lose all my respect for you; and I would not cease to respect one to whom I owe so much. May your better moments teach you the cruel injustice of this!"

The tears were now streaming from her eyes; and, as she was about to leave me, I sprang and caught her hands, and begged her not to go.

"Unhand me!" she said, resolutely; "and do not touch me again!"

"But hear me, Helen, I pray you!"

"I leave you to your own reflections."

As she went up the stairs which led to her chamber, I heard her sob bitterly. Thus left alone, I seated my-

self upon the sofa where she had sat but a few minutes before, and, burying my head in my hands, gave loose rein to my own dark thoughts. For a time I fancied that Helen was unjust and cruel; but the mist soon melted away from my vision, and I saw how foolish I had been. I was fearful that I had sealed my fate, and that she was forever lost to me. What a mean thing she must think me! I had conducted myself as though I had a right to claim her hand, and I had told her that I was convinced she loved me; but that was not enough,— I must add insult, and cruelly wound one of the most pure and sensitive beings in the world!

> "That very hour, when passion, turned to wrath,
> Resembled hatred most,
> Made my whole soul a chaos; — in that hour
> The tempters found me." *

I could hardly find it in my heart to justify Helen for saying that she did not consider me worthy of her love; but I felt that, had I been wooing Irene Dinneford, I should have shown more deference, and not have said "You love me,— your heart responds to mine," &c. And yet, considering all the circumstances, my demeanor towards Helen should have been more respectful than towards Irene. But my transgression did not end here;

* "The Lady of Lyons."

I had shown my littleness by getting jealous and angry, and so had foolishly wounded one whom I knew to cherish the deepest gratitude in her heart toward me for what I had done for her. It is well to confer favors, but low and mean, ay, contemptible, to ever show, by words or actions, in your intercourse with those you have benefited, that you have not forgotten your good deeds, and look for something in return. That moment the benefaction is cancelled; and what was truly a blessing becomes a cankering curse!

What frail beings we are, and how prone to err! Passion bends us before the might of its power, and sways us to and fro as the heavy winds sway the trees of the forest. Under its influence we say and do a thousand things, which, a moment after, we would give worlds to recall! The longer I thought of our conversation, the more I condemned myself; and I only found relief by a good, hearty, *unmanly* cry. I remained in one position until I heard my uncle and aunt drive up to the door, when I sought my bed; but not to sleep, for disappointment and remorse frightened slumber from my pillow. I tossed and tumbled all night long, and was glad when I saw the first approach of day. I arose while it was yet dark, and went out to ramble, I knew not and cared not whither, if I could only get away from my own thoughts.

Unconsciously I wandered to the spot I have before

described, where was the rock in the valley at the foot of the hill, and the brook and trees forming circles at its base. I had been far beyond it, and came up on the side opposite to that approached when going directly from the house. Judge of my surprise to find a female kneeling at the foot of the rock, her head laid in the niche. A nearer view convinced me that it was Helen. I listened, and found that she was weeping bitterly. What should I do now? Turn and fly, or go to her, and seek to dry her tears and dispel her griefs? I could not leave her there alone; and, with a palpitating heart, slowly approached her. I stopped within a few feet of her, for I could go no further. Every sob which fell upon my ear pierced my heart like an arrow. As I looked upon her, my bosom heaved a deep sigh; she heard it, and sprang to her feet, and hastily brushed away the tears.

"Forgive me, Helen," I said; "I knew not that you were here."

"It is easily forgiven, then," she answered.

"And cannot you forgive where there is injury, Helen?"

"It was never a difficult thing for me to forgive injuries."

"Then pardon me for the unjustifiable language I made use of to you last night."

"I do, Henri, with all my heart."

"I thank you, Helen; and may God bless you as you

deserve! Last night I suffered bitterly; reproaching myself for what I had done, and fearing that I had lost your friendship forever. I will never offend again, Helen; and I beg of you to restore me to the same place in your affections which I once enjoyed."

"I will do so; for I am glad to find that in your better moments you are what you always were. You are not bad nor unfeeling, but hasty and passionate."

"Bless you, my own, dear sister! I thought your heart had changed; but I find that it possesses the gentle and forgiving spirit of your childhood."

"And I would not have it otherwise, Henri; for, if ever I allow myself to harbor revengeful feelings, then I am most unhappy."

"I wish that I could forgive as readily as you can!"

"If you try, you can."

"It is very hard to forgive, sometimes."

"Very true. But the reason why we cannot is because we do not wish it. Your words cut me to the heart, last night, and lowered you very much in my opinion; and, had I not wished for a reconciliation, I should not so readily have forgiven you."

"I was angry and jealous, Helen, or I should not have spoken as I did. But there is time for atonement. Make my case your own, and then judge what my feelings must have been. I thought you cruel to reject me, and I was fearful that you had given your heart to

another. There was a mingling in my feelings of disappointed love, jealousy, bitterness and despair."

"Rest assured that I will judge you in the most favorable light. But, Henri, as we are now friends again, permit me to tell you that, if you would live peaceably and happily, you must learn to control your feelings and passions. When you are married, unless you conquer this habit, you may, in a moment of excitement, heap unjustifiable reproaches upon your wife; and, should she possess a delicate, sensitive mind, how her heart would be made to bleed!"

"I will heed your admonitions, fair instructress; and henceforth, when the evil spirit is seeking to bend me to his purpose, I will think of you; and there shall be a magic in the thought, which shall disarm the demon, and send him powerless away."

"Look to Heaven; for God is mighty, and mortals are weak."

"But God makes use of erring mortals to accomplish a good work, even His work; and you shall be the good angel, to charm away all evil."

"I am weak, as well as you; but I will aid you all I can, and that will be but little. You must rely upon yourself, and trust in God."

"And yet, I would have your aid and sympathy, because I have so much confidence in you. I have felt, for some years, that I was not fitted to stand alone. I

know my own nature so well that I fear cruel disappointment."

"The true soul will be brave in all trials. You cannot overcome the faithful."

"But very few, comparatively, Helen, can stand firm, when the pitiless storm of misfortune is beating upon them, unless there is some near and dear one to sustain them. You may talk to the old man of the necessity of looking to God for support, when his limbs have become weak, and he is tottering to his grave; and, though he trusts never so much, he will need a human arm to lean upon, or a stout cane which the good God has caused to grow for his use and support, when he has no longer strength sufficient to sustain his decaying body."

"Well, Henri, I believe you are right; and I doubt not that, when you need more strength than you now have, you will find the being who is capable of imparting it to you. As for us, let us be like a good brother and sister, and then we can strengthen each other."

"I appreciate your friendship, Helen, and your sisterly love; and I assure you that I value them highly. But I can imagine that the time may come when they would be of nothing worth to me. There have been brothers who have felt very sad to see favorite sisters wholly devoted to others — to see them married. And how should I feel to see you a wife? But is not the

relation of brother and sister too cold for us? And is not friendship, view it as you will, tame and insipid?"

"O, no, Henri! do not say that! — it is a holy relation!"

"I know it, but —"

"Nay, I would not have you undervalue friendship, or sisterly regard. But it is time I had returned. Come, let us go; it is not well to tarry longer."

I mechanically obeyed, somewhat puzzled to understand Helen. More than once she had manifested for me, by her looks, a regard, I thought, stronger than friendship; and but just now the beautiful expression had flitted a moment upon her face. If she cherished no other feeling but friendship, why was this? Surely she cannot be a coquette. My thoughts were broken in upon by Helen's remarking that the weather was delightful.

"Very beautiful," I replied. "But the most beautiful things in nature sometimes jar upon our feelings."

"I pray you cease to indulge in such thoughts. Come, you will mar all our happiness. Let us be as we once were."

"I fear we never shall be."

"Be not faithless, but believing."

"O, Helen!"

"Look at the petals of this pretty flower, Henri.

How soft they are, and what bright tints! Are they not beautiful? Come,—you don't look at them."

"They are very pretty," I replied.

"Is that all? You ought to talk with your uncle about flowers. He would not call you silly, as he does me."

"Does he call you so?"

"Yes, he does. We go out for a walk, and I find a beautiful flower, and carry it to him, and tell him all about it, showing him all the tinted and downy leaves, and then he will say, 'Well, if you are not a silly girl, to make such a fuss about so insignificant a thing as that! One would suppose you had found a great hunk of gold!'

"And then I tell him that gold is not half so beautiful as my flower; and he will laugh at me, and say that 'where ignorance is bliss, 't is folly to be wise,' or some such provoking thing."

"Uncle likes to have his joke."

"I know he does, bless him! But he don't like flowers as well as I do."

"There are very few who do."

"That is strange. Why, I loved them when I was a little ragged fright, and gathered dandelions for Deacon Webber. I one day saved all the yellow flowers, and tied a spire of grass around them; but when I went

home, the deacon threw them in my face, and boxed my ears soundly for so wasting my time."

"The brute!"

"There, that evil being is getting possession of you again! I see that you will have to watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

"With you by my side, there would be but little danger of temptation."

"Do you think so? Remember last night."

We had now arrived home, and our conversation ended,—I more in love than ever. The reader may think it strange that I should still remain, after such a decided refusal. Under different circumstances, I should most likely have returned home at once. But I had lived years with Helen, and had engaged to marry another in a brief period after I left my uncle's. My aunt had told me, confidentially, that Helen appeared greatly distressed when she learned of my engagement; and she doubted not that her subsequent ill-health and low spirits were mainly caused by it; besides, I saw many things which convinced me that I was not wholly indifferent to her. I fancied that her affections had received a severe shock, from which they might in time recover. I believed that, if I had offered myself prior to going to New York, she would at once have accepted me. Had I been true to her, one refusal would so have wounded my pride, that it is doubtful whether I should

have ever broached the subject again. I knew that, without her, life would be robbed of all its beauty; with her, I should be happy. I alone must win the priceless jewel, and wear it next my heart.

Another week passed away, and though we were much of the time together, I did not approach the subject which interested me most of all. Not that I had less inclination, but I was fearful of jeopardizing privileges which I now enjoyed. Helen had seemed to forget the past, and unreservedly gave me her affection and esteem. Like happy children, we rambled and chatted gayly together. We read from the same book, sitting under shady trees, or at home in the parlor, where we spent the most of our time, rarely interrupted; for the old folks, so it seemed to me, began to consider us lovers, and thought that, like lovers, we should be happiest when left to ourselves. The arrangement suited me, and I hoped it did Helen. Mr. Gray was no longer in town to trouble me. I was present when he bade them all good-by, saying he should not return until another spring. I saw him depart with infinite satisfaction. I never believed for a moment that Helen would marry him; and yet, with the consistency of a jealous lover, I was all the time fretting myself lest she should.

We were in the parlor, one evening, just at dusk. The day had been exceedingly hot, and the air oppressive; for the earth was parched with heat. In the afternoon,

a cloud had arisen in the west, darkened all the heavens, and, amid heavy winds, loud thunder, and fierce lightning, had poured down the water in torrents, washing the dust from the leaves of the trees, pattering all over the fields, which held up their dusty faces to catch the jewelled drops, which made them look clean and bright again.

When the shower had passed over, the air was clear and bracing, the birds sang gayly, and everything seemed quickened with renewed life. The leaves on the trees, the spires of grass in the fields, vines and shrubbery, glittered, as the setting sun shone upon them, like robes studded with pearls, and sparkled as though hung with millions of jewels.

On such an evening we sat alone. We had noted the happy change which nature had so speedily undergone, like a weary traveller, throwing off dusty, soiled robes, and putting on clean and befitting apparel. We watched the sun as it went down in the clear, blue sky, throwing a golden light over hill and valley, and brightening all the scene with its mellow rays. Spell-bound, we gazed at the myriads of starry eyes that looked out from every tree and bower, and smiled and glistened on the face of every green field, hill and dale. The king of day was no longer in view; the yellow lustre, which lingered for a time, faded gradually away, and the shadows began to gather around. They stole noiselessly into the room

where we sat, darkening the corners, creeping slyly under the sofas, tables, and chairs. Anon they were taking their places under the trees, by the sides of fences and buildings, gathering in vast numbers in yonder woods, and in due time pouring out and besieging, and darkening all the world. Then Venus, that most beautiful of the starry hosts, which millions say "is mine," with her sparkling fingers removed the slight blue veil which covered her face, and looked down upon the earth brightly, smilingly, as beautiful as when she first took her place in the soft blue sky.

"There is my star!" said Helen.

"What if I should claim it as mine?"

"We shall not quarrel, if you do; for it is like God's love,—all can have it."

"How long we have sat without speaking!"

"With no loss of enjoyment, I hope?"

"No."

"Could we have been as happy, do you think, had we conversed?"

"I do not know."

"There are moments, Henri, when spoken words would diminish, and not add to, our felicity."

"Do you think so?"

"Ay, truly. When the soul drinks in large draughts of the harmony, beauty, light and glory of the gods,—when it feasts on life's holiest, most nutritious aliment,—

what power have poor spoken words to add to the sum of our spiritual felicity? Methinks that at such a time they are but harsh discords!"

"You are growing eloquent, Helen!"

"It is but the eloquence of truth."

"I do not doubt it; but the number who ever taste of such pure delights is comparatively small."

"I fear that what you say is true; but why is it, when there are so many things in the world to beautify and enrapture the soul?"

"It is because the mind is not sufficiently expanded and elevated; the affections and thoughts are animal, and not spiritual. The low and depraved find enjoyment in the company of the vile and repulsive; they are merry, and at home, where the elevated soul would suffer the most cruel agony. The reason of this is obvious; the mind, the heart, the affections, are in harmony with the vice, filth and dark depravity, by which they are surrounded."

"O, when will man rise above these things, and be pure and spiritual?"

"When truth shall be brought to bear directly upon his heart; when a more perfect social state shall take the place of the discordant, unequal, antagonistic, selfish one, which now exists."

"What do you mean by a more perfect social state?"

"Did you never think of the false and selfish relations

which now exist in society? — the continual clashing of interests, ever stirring up enmities betwixt man and man, setting brother against brother and friend against friend; beginning with individuals, and extending from them to neighborhoods, from neighborhoods to towns, from towns to counties, from counties to states, from states to nations? It is like the pebble thrown into the water, forming circle after circle, wider and wider, until they reach the surrounding shore."

"I have often thought of these things; but where is the remedy?"

"In a more perfect social state. It is vain to look for harmony, peace and brotherly love, while these false and conflicting relations exist. Now, every man seeketh his own and not his brother's welfare. The few live in idleness and luxury, the many in weary toil and poverty; and this state of things waxes worse, causing crime, disease, and suffering."

"And can there be a state which will equalize labor, banish poverty and crime, and cause men to live in peace?"

"I do not doubt it; the people should associate together, so that their hours of labor may be diminished, and their interests no longer clash. All should do something, and do that kind of labor for which they are best adapted. Labor should be made attractive, and then there would be no drones. Men are not naturally averse

to labor; but it is the circumstances by which they are surrounded, or the unsuitable kind of labor, or over-work, which makes them averse to it."

"Your views are new to me. If there could be a state of society in which every one could be of service to his brother, while serving himself, it would be glorious. Society, then, would be truly divine."

"A divine order of society is the true order of society. How harmonious are all the laws of nature! The myriads of planets and suns which move through the infinity of space are so governed by attraction and repulsion, that there is never a discord,— no clashing, but perfect harmony. The very stars roll to music! Nature, in all her varied aspects, is still harmonious! Poets tell us of her unwritten music; and the thought is beautiful and inspiring, that throughout the great anthem of the universe there is no discord, but delightful harmony running through the whole,— sometimes soft, pathetic, low, beautiful, and enrapturing,— sometimes mournful, sad, plaintive, or loud, wild, and passionate. The crash of thunders, roar of winds and tempests, are as free from discord as sighs of zephyrs, humming of insects, rustle of leaves, murmuring of brooks, and singing of birds."

"You, too, are growing eloquent."

"I ought to, upon so glorious a subject as this. I have faith to believe that man has not yet reached his true destiny; he will learn, by and by, that any wrong

done to one of his fellow-beings affects not only the one who is wronged, but the one who is guilty of the wrong; and it does not stop there, but extends abroad, touching, with its wizard fingers, the fortunes of thousands, and blighting wherever it touches; — the fairest flowers of life, peace, joy, happiness, wither in its presence, while the most noxious weeds, hatred, envy, jealousy, grow and flourish greatly."

"It is truly so, I doubt not; but man does not understand it as yet. Every one is seeking for earthly treasures; and with many it is a virtue, rather than a vice, to be able to get the best end of the bargain."

"Honesty is said to be the best policy; but very few really believe the proverb to be true,— hence they use any safe means to get rich. The motto is, 'Put money in your purse;' — honestly, if you can; if not, dishonestly."

"And every dishonest act, you think, brings with it a train of evils?"

"It must be so. No one can do wrong without feeling the effect in his own life, or without its having an effect upon his own life; and the evil, and the effect of it, may run through the world."

"But do not good deeds also affect the world, and live on forever?"

"Yes, thank heaven! and they are more potent than deeds of evil; and this should encourage us to persevere, knowing that the right and the true shall ultimately

triumph. 'The good shall live forever, but the evil shall die.'"

"I thank you for what you have said, for it is food for thought and reflection. I am always grateful for a new thought, because new thoughts expand the mind and soul."

During our conversation, I had unconsciously wound my arm around Helen's waist, and clasped both of her hands in mine. I saw that my words had favorably impressed her, and that she was regarding me with that beautiful expression which glowed on no countenance but hers. "Now is my time," thought I; "one more trial, and, if she rejects me, it shall be the last. It is the time, the hour for love, and I must succeed!"

We sat some time in silence, she seeming as well pleased with her position as I with mine. At length I addressed her thus:

"Helen, I have been very happy with you to-night; so happy, that the bliss of years seems concentrated into moments. There is but one thing wanting to make my bliss complete."

"O, Henri, don't! We are happy now,—let that suffice."

"It cannot suffice! Promise to be mine, and it is all I ask!"

"It is not right for you to speak of this again so soon! Do not say any more, I pray you!"

While saying this, she withdrew her hands from mine, and removed my arm from her waist.

"I cannot think it wrong, Helen! You wrong me, and wrong yourself, by repelling me from you!"

I now arose, and walked the floor, greatly excited.

"Be calm, Henri!"

"No, no! I cannot, will not be calm! Say that you are mine, now, this moment! — for I cannot wait longer!"

I did not wait for an answer, but caught her in my arms, and folded her vehemently to my breast.

"Henri," she said, "let me go!"

"No, I will not until you promise to become my wife!"

"I command you!"

"And will you not be mine, Helen?"

"No, I cannot."

I now released her, and said, "Helen, this is the last time I shall trouble you. Accept now, for I never will ask you again!"

She remained silent.

"I give you till to-morrow to consider of it; reflect well, and then decide. Think of the depth of my affections, and that they are all yours! If then you reject me, I take my immediate departure."

"You have my answer now; I cannot change it."

"My determination is fixed, then; I depart early in the morning."

"I would not have you go!"

"But go I shall; so take your choice, either to be mine, or be separated from me."

"You will sometimes write me?"

"No!"

"But you will come and see us again soon?"

"Not for a year."

"A year!"

"Yes, and longer, perhaps."

"You will not forget your friend Helen?"

"I will try to forget her."

"And I will remember you; and, if ever I pray in sincerity and truth, it shall be for your welfare and happiness."

"O, Helen!"

"We may meet again, Henri, when the skies shall be brighter, and the landscapes more beautiful."

"I dare not hope it now, Helen. The future looks all dark."

"It will brighten again."

"Never!"

"Look not on the dark side of life; — the light is more hopeful and beautiful."

"It is all dark for me."

"Peace and light shall come again."

She took my hand, and said, "God bless you!"

looked kindly, but sadly into my face, whispered "Good-night," and hastened to her room.

After passing a sleepless night, I arose and prepared for my departure, half hoping that Helen might relent. My uncle and aunt were surprised at my sudden resolution to leave them; but, as I told them it was necessary for me to go, they said no more about it. Helen still looked sad, but showed no signs of relenting; and I was obliged to bid her good-by with no hope of ever having the right to call her my own. When I was about to start, she offered me her hand, which I grasped with fervor, scarcely able to restrain myself from again folding her to my heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NEW LEBANON.— THE SHAKERS.

I FOUND everything going on harmoniously at home, for peace and happiness had returned to a long-deserted roof. Mrs. Stewart was the good angel who watched over the interests of all. She had found the children in a worse state than she left them. They were more fretful and ungovernable; but the vicious influences, which had so long surrounded them, were removed; and, for her, it was not a very hard thing to eradicate much of the evil, which had been growing and taking deeper root for so many years. They would frequently let their passions, for some trivial cause, run away with their judgments; but she was ever ready, with her word of peace and look of love and forbearance, to soothe and calm the troubled sea of passion.

There is a power in goodness which the most abandoned may be made to feel. It can tame the most fierce, and cause the madman to become as gentle as a little child. The raging passions are calmed and stilled in its presence, even as Jesus calmed the stormy sea, when he said, "Peace, peace, be still." The reason why evil

gains so many victories is, because there is so much professed and so little real every-day-life goodness in the world.

The influence of Mrs. Stewart was just what was wanted to counteract the evils which had so long mingled with the very air which my brothers and sisters inhaled. There is nothing more fatal to a family of children than to live with those who are abusive, overbearing, wicked, self-righteous, fault-finding and quarrelsome. It makes them like those with whom they reside. Many children are passionate, overbearing and quarrelsome, because their parents are so. They inherit bad dispositions from them, and example and practice make them worse. And yet such parents wonder why their children should be so hasty and passionate!

While on my visit at uncle's, I had scarcely lifted my hand to do any kind of work; but now I thought the best thing that I could do was to aid my brothers in their work on the farm. I was suffering from low spirits and ill health, caused by my recent disappointment. I thought labor in the open air would be most conducive to health, and exert a greater healing power than medicines. A farm is the best place for invalids, especially those of cities and large villages; for they need the pure country air, and that kind of labor which will call all the powers of the physical system into action. Most of the drugs prescribed for the sick poison and corrupt the blood, while labor

upon a farm, regular hours, good air and wholesome food, remove disease and restore health.

It took us, with our hired help, till the twentieth of August to finish haying. The exercise was beneficial to me; but it is vain to expect bodily health when the mind is diseased.

I have not spoken, for some time, of Deacon Webber. The week previous to my arrival home he met with a sad mishap. He was detected in purloining a part of the money collected at the last communion season. This led to an investigation, which made it very evident that he had done so for years. A church-meeting was immediately called, when all the facts were laid before it, and he was unanimously expelled. It was not long before everybody found out that he was always a bad man. The members of the church said they never had any confidence in him. The crime of stealing money collected for church purposes was looked upon by his brethren as almost equal to the unpardonable sin; and some were certain that it was the very sin itself, especially when the deed was done by a deacon.

When Helen Means lived with him, pale, ragged and dirty, the number was not very large in the church who thought the deacon was guilty of sin in thus treating her like a brute. But there were some who regarded the matter as Christians should; but they were powerless in numbers and influence. Many others would have con-

demned him, if they had known all the facts. Those who were now loudest in their condemnation then vented their maledictions upon my head, because I had aided the poor girl to escape from one who shamefully abused her. When will people learn that the beings upon whom God has stamped his image, without regard to nation, clime or color, are holier and more sacred than rites, ceremonies, holy days and sacred places? Better steal from an hundred churches than wrong one little, helpless child.

On the first of September, my sister Jane was married to Herbert Mansfield, a young farmer, who lived in a neighboring town. At her wedding I again saw Helen Means. She was cordial as a sister,— nothing more. If it had not been for Jane's feelings, and Mrs. Stewart's, I should not have been present. I treated her with more of coldness than I ever manifested towards any being before in whom I had the least interest. My conduct was noticed, and Mrs. Stewart seemed hurt. Helen returned with my uncle and aunt, the next day after Jane's marriage. In spite of my coldness, she urged me to come and pay them another visit soon. I bade her remember what I said the evening of our last interview.

"Then," said she, "I shall come and see you."

"Possibly you may," I replied.

I was not present when she left for home, and this I did not regret; for it might have been a hard task to have preserved my stoical coolness, and manifested no emotion.

It may be asked, where were Helen's parents, during this time? They were written to repeatedly, without any answer being returned. Then direct search was made for them, but no such family could be found.

I now resolved to visit New York, and from there go wherever my inclinations might lead me. The visit of Helen had only made me more restless and uneasy,— I wanted excitement. I encountered much opposition in my plan, especially from Mrs. Stewart; but go I must. I went to Boston; from there to Providence, and by steamboat to New York city. I found my friends well, happy and prosperous. Ernest and Irene were to be married the first week in November, and I was expected to be present. They both seemed highly delighted to see me, but I was ill at ease in their company; for their mutual happiness made me think still more of my own disappointment.

I had the pleasure of an introduction to Ernest's mother, who was in New York, on a visit. I found her an intelligent, agreeable lady, who looked as though her experience had been bitter and painful.

After spending a week in New York, I took a sail up the Hudson, and landed at Albany. In this beautiful city I tarried a number of days. At my hotel I became acquainted with a gentleman and wife and two daughters, who had been to Saratoga Springs and Niagara Falls. The weather was so warm and pleasant that they had

determined to visit New Lebanon Springs, and remain there as long as the pleasant weather lasted. I gladly accepted an invitation to accompany them, for I found them intelligent and agreeable. We engaged a private carriage to carry us to Lebanon, which landed us, in a few hours, at the Columbia House.

In this charming spot we remained a number of weeks; for the weather continued beautiful until the first of November. New Lebanon has many attractions, and for real beauty and variety of scenery it is seldom surpassed. There was but one thing lacking, to make it perfect to my eye. A sheet of water, quietly reposing in the valley, would give it the finishing stroke. It might then be too beautiful. Early in the morning, it required but little imagination to supply this deficiency. Looking down from either of the many eminences which overlook the valley, you behold a white vapor, resting there so calmly that it seems like a lake. I have often climbed those hills at early dawn, and feasted my eyes and soul upon the beauty and grandeur which were all around me. The white lake, at the foot of an hundred hills and mountains, would soon depart, when old Sol came up from behind them, and looked down upon it with his eyes of fire. Up the mountain sides the silvery mist would creep, laying hold of the shrubs and trees with its spirit-hands, pulling itself upward until it gained the highest summit; and then, catching a ray of the sun, it changed to a rosy hue,

and flew away to heaven. As I gazed upon the beautiful sight, I thought of the spirits of men, lifted by the rays of the "Sun of righteousness" up to their God.

Sometimes, in my rambles, I would take the road leading to Pittsfield. In a few minutes I would attain a sufficient elevation to tempt me to tarry, and take a view of the scene. With rapture I would gaze upon the fields running away up to the tops of the mountains, dotted over with trees, burdened with corn, ripening for the harvest. Yonder, in the valley, was a fine growth of wood, the trees waving in the morning breeze. All around it were greenest fields, with an undulating surface, smiling as the golden sunbeams shot down upon them. Beyond these were still other fields and groves. The hills all around were covered with trees, grass, or ripening grain. In the valley was the little village of Lebanon, reposing as quietly as a beautiful bird in a green tree.

Walking on some hundred rods further, the scenery was equally beautiful, though its aspect was greatly changed. In an opposite direction, at a certain point, you could take in, with one sweep of vision, miles of the most delightful and sublime scenery. It was difficult to say at what point the view was the best; for, if you travelled in a hundred different directions, you would find the scenery different at every point. One moment you would think, "it is the most beautiful here;" and the next,

having changed your position, the most beautiful there. The surface was so rounding and full in its undulations, — wave rising on wave,— and there were so many of them, and so different, that you could only say, "it is all beautiful, all glorious;" reminding one of the changes of countenance with some beautiful woman, each one beautiful, and yet difficult to say which the most beautiful. It is said that there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous; and in one of my rambles I had an illustration of the fact. At the hotel I had been introduced to a fat, good-natured gentleman of sixty. He had formerly been a merchant in Boston; and, having accumulated a large fortune, he retired from business, and purchased a farm some twenty miles from the city. He built him a splendid house and other buildings, and then employed an experienced farmer, and commenced the cultivation of his land. But, contrary to the expectation of his neighbors and friends, he studied agriculture, not that he might make his home beautiful and attractive to the mind and heart, but so productive that his family would find ample support, without using his vast income from railroad, factory, and bank stock, and rents from buildings, &c. To have flowers growing around his house he thought entirely superfluous; but he entered largely into the cultivation of grapes, because they would sell readily, and at high prices. In front of his house was a large field, nearly level, containing six acres. He

studied some time how to turn that to the best advantage. He finally prepared it for an onion-field, and, in due time, it yielded him great profits.

On one of the most beautiful mornings in October, I arose early, and went to the top of a high eminence, to see the sun rise. Not a cloud was in the heavens, and the sky was of the deepest blue, and the green earth was free from mists and fogs. There was a hill covered with woods between me and the sun; and it was higher than the one upon which I stood, so that I could not see the sun when it first appeared above the horizon. But I was amply repaid for the loss; for the golden king flashed his burning rays through the trees, and lit up the woods with a strange fire,—for they looked red and glowing, and there was no smoke or cinders to obscure the beauty and grandeur of the scene. I was in raptures, and I wanted some dear friend to share my joy. In a few minutes, the sun rose proudly above the hills, and poured his rays down upon the valleys of Lebanon, covering them all over with smiles. I gazed around me, happy and blest, drinking in largely of this soul-reviving nectar of the gods, of which the valleys were brimming. Some two hundred rods from where I stood I saw my fat acquaintance, gazing about him as though he was enraptured, as well as I. He had chosen his point of observation well, for miles of the most beautiful and varied scenery could be taken in at one view. He saw me, and directed his

steps towards me; and I, at the same time, towards him. We soon met, when he said:

"Good-morning, Mr. Eaton; a fine, breezy morning."

"Very beautiful," I replied; "and I have enjoyed it richly."

"Well, so have I; for it is healthy, and gives one a sharp appetite for breakfast. A good breakfast and a good appetite are capital things, Mr. Eaton."

"Very true; but this scenery is so magnificent and enchanting that the soul may feed upon it."

"Why, yes, the scenery is well enough, I suppose; but it's lonesome, rather lonesome, Mr. Eaton,— not after my sort, exactly."

"But don't you think that such a scene as is here spread out before us is eminently adapted to the wants of man's higher and better nature?"

"Well, I don't know about man's higher and better nature; I never discovered it yet, and I have had some dealings with the animal in my day; —selfish, all selfish, Mr. Eaton."

"But you believe in it, do you not?"

"Can't say as I do. It will do well enough to talk about. It's what they call poetry, I suppose; — you have been reading poetry, I make no doubt, Mr. Eaton. I can get enough to feed on, down to the Columbia House; but this scenery would starve a cat,— yes, starve a cat, Mr. Eaton. Ha! ha!"

"But then you think it beautiful, Mr. ——?"

"Tolerably so; but then I don't think it 's well managed, this land about here. Now, there 's a fine valley down there; why, there is as much as ten acres in that ere field, and scarcely a stone in it. Well, sir, plough that up, and manure it well, and plant it with onions, and you could raise,—let me see,—sixty hundred bushels; and they would look so green and pleasant, all growing in such beautiful, long, straight rows;—there 's nothing like it, sir. When they are ripe, you could take them right to Albany, and put them on board the boat, and send them to New York city, and get your cash; besides, they are excellent cut up in vinegar for salad, and I like them *biled* to eat with roast beef. But fried onions, with pork, is the greatest onion dish. Did you ever eat any fixed in that way? Luscious, sir, luscious! They make my mouth water to think of them. I wish I kept the hotel, down there. I 'd have them every day."

"They are rather fragrant," I remarked.

"I know they are, but I like it; you can smell them a great ways; and I always feel, when I inhale their fragrance, as though the spirit of my home had come out to welcome me to dinner. I have a fine onion-field in front of my house,—it 's magnificent, sir. When I bought the place, I found six acres all in one piece, and precious little was raised on it; and I ploughed it up and planted it with onions. And—would you believe it, sir?—

I raised last year forty-five hundred bushels of onions, which brought me, on the spot, twenty-two hundred and fifty dollars! I have got a new field, this year, which will yield me a thousand bushels more. That 's the way to farm, sir; turn your land to some profit."

"Don't you raise anything but onions?"

"O, yes! I sold forty bushels of grapes last year; and I raise sweet potatoes and corn,— but chiefly onions."

"Will sweet potatoes grow in Massachusetts?"

"Yes, but they are not very sweet. I raise a few for my own use, and a hundred bushels of the other kind; but nothing pays like onions."

This was utilitarian enough, in all conscience; and, although he had sadly interrupted my train of thought, and introduced one which, under the circumstances, could not have entered my mind, I did not care to continue the conversation; so I left him to his profound meditations. I wandered some distance before our breakfast-hour, but I could not bring back the feelings which I had before I received my lesson on the virtue, productiveness, and profit of onions. "And such," thought I, "are the emotions of some people when surrounded with those things which are the most magnificent and beautiful." I met my pursy friend again at the breakfast-table, and I can bear ample testimony to the sharpness of his appetite. But, reader, having given you a taste of the ridiculous, I

will try and take the necessary step, and return once more to the sublime; if, perchance, I had reached that elevated position.

Some mornings, when I rambled while yet the dawn was but just glimmering in the east, I was transported with the strange melody which the winds played upon the harp-strings of the mountains. A million trees, swept by the invisible fingers of the breeze, vibrated in unison, sending forth a continuous roar of rustling music. At other times the music, or the manner of performing it, was different.

On the hill-side a few trees shook and rustled, giving out notes few, but loud and distinct. Then the wanton winds leaped across the valley, and made music there, which was soon joined in by the trees in the valley below; then a grove in the distance would catch the strain, and would be answered by the trees on the top of the mountain. Anon, the hills, the valleys, and the mountains, all united in one grand chorus. It was like listening to a solo, then a duet, a trio, quartet, and finishing with an anthem, with full chorus. Down the sides of these mountains leaped many babbling streams, and, in their course, they had gulleyed out the hills, making deep ravines and beautiful glens. In these ravines were tall trees, showing that the torrent had done its work many years ago. I often lingered in these glens, where the light was so dim when without

the world was blushing in sunlight. I lingered and listened to the liquid notes of the leaping brooks, and queried how many years had passed away since they pushed out those large masses of gravel and slate-stone, forming the deep ravine, which should darken more and more as the trees sprang up, increasing in size and number. All these things were matter of interest and study to me. In the large city I sought for an alleviation of my sorrows in vain. Here there were so many things of interest, instructive, beautiful, that, at times, I forgot my troubles and disappointments. Here I felt that I could commune with God, and worship Him in the beautiful temples which his hand had erected.

There are a number of springs at New Lebanon, and their temperature is very different, ranging from warm to very cold. The coldest is but a few degrees above freezing, in the hottest days of summer; while the warmest pours out water enough to keep the machinery of a small satinet factory moving the year round. And they are not troubled with ice anywhere about the mill, for the warm water from the spring keeps the stream clear from it.

I have since been at New Lebanon in the month of December, when it was extremely cold, and the little pond of water below the warm spring was entirely clear from ice, and there was quite a steam arising from its surface. I half-fancied that it was old Nick's wash-

kettle, and he had got his fire kindled under it; and I expected soon to see it boil. I went and put my hands into it, and found a very agreeable contrast between the cold, frosty air and the warm water.

While at New Lebanon, I frequently visited that strange class of people called Shakers. This was the first settlement formed in the country. Ann Lee, or Mother Ann, with a few devoted followers, pitched their tent here. She met with some persecution. In a two-story red house, about a mile from the Shaker village, she was tried for certain misdemeanors, and the Shakers say that she was dragged down stairs by the hair of her head. She then prophesied the time would come when there would be Shaker worship in that house. The prophecy proved true; for, many years after her death, the house was offered for sale, and the Shakers bought it, and then they had a glorious time; for they danced, sung, exhorted and prayed, in every room in the building, from the attic to the cellar.

I was pleased with the neatness and taste everywhere displayed about their premises. Their buildings were all in good order, and every room like wax-work. The same care was taken of the out-buildings. Some of their barns were models for the saving of labor and strength. It did one good to go into them, they were so clean; and then the cattle and horses were in such good condition. They did not look as though they were half-starved, over-

worked and shamefully whipped. Evidently the best care was taken of them; and there are very many people who would do well to copy after the Shakers, and learn to treat with kindness all the creatures of God.

The Shakers early adopted the community system, and it has succeeded well for them. Everything shows a reasonable degree of prosperity and success. Their fields are well cultivated, and all things seem to move on harmoniously; and, from all that I saw of them, I conceived them to be an honest, sincere people. The idea which many entertain, that they are false to their profession, I believe to be erroneous. To prevent the passions from being excited, or the awakening of carnal desires, the utmost precaution is observed. The dress of the sexes is so fashioned that the form loses its natural voluptuous appearance; and this is designed that the passions may not be excited. The dresses of the women are cut high in the neck and extend to their feet; the waists are very short and slightly gathered, making the wearer look long, lean and lank, and, like some of Dickens' females, which he so graphically describes, all the way of a bigness. There is no probability of the Bloomer costume being adopted by the Shakers. They would regard it as a device of the devil, and would look upon it with all the horror of the many very prudish old maids of both sexes. The Shaker women usually wear neck-cloths, which are closely buttoned up to the chin. They wear white

caps upon their heads, fitting close and smoothly, and jutting out in front some two inches, concealing a side-view of the face.

In the summer season, on Sundays, their dresses are white; and, should they be seen in or near a grave-yard, with their lank faces, pale, sallow complexion, and sunken eyes, they would most likely be taken for a company of dead folks, who had come out of their graves to take the air.

The same caution is observed in the dress of the other sex. The fashion of either is anything but pleasing or beautiful. When nature arrays herself, we always observe that her garments are fashioned in the most pleasing and delightful manner. We are ever charmed with the simplicity and beauty which smile from every valley, and look down from every tree. In their season her robes are gorgeous, enriched with a thousand colors and beautiful tints. Her appearance is ever lovely, ever inviting. Nature's children love her so well, and believe her so wise and perfect, that they delight to copy after her. The Shakers, living in the continual violation of her laws in relation to the sexes, and the dearest and most holy social relations, must, of necessity, set her example at naught in the fashioning of their apparel. The sexes are not allowed to clasp each other by the hand, or exchange any of those little endearments and courtesies which are so natural and so pleasing. A man is never

allowed to travel or be alone with one woman; but he can travel with two, or two men may travel with one of the other sex. The women salute each other with holy kisses; so also the men. On pleasant days, they hold meetings on the tops of the mountains, and parties, miles apart, toss holy kisses at each other. Their worship consists in marching, dancing, whirling and singing. They will whirl for hours, and at last fall down in what they call a trance. In their jumpings they throw themselves into the most grotesque and surprising shapes. Whirling for a great length of time, and jumping, &c., only occur when they are filled with the spirit, and when they "get up the power."

In the Shaker Godhead there is a quaternity, instead of a trinity,— four persons, instead of three. The first is the eternal Father, and the second Ann Lee, the eternal mother; the third the Son, and the fourth the Holy Ghost. All who have not had an opportunity to hear the Shaker gospel in this world will have it proclaimed to them in the next. Very many of the great men, kings, statesmen, orators, generals, &c., have heard the gospel since they died, and have become believers and leaders in the Shaker bands of the spirit-world. The patriarch Abraham is one of their first and best; so they sing,

"Father is a leader;
Let us all be true, that

We may have a portion
Of Mother's love and blessing."

In singing they perform but one part, the air of the tune; and, as many of the voices are not adapted to the air, and can only reach it with a great deal of effort, the effect is anything but pleasing. They have a sounding-board overhead, and I heard them sing some tunes which run very high; and the noise was hideous,— more like screeching than singing. Their tunes and songs, in known and unknown tongues, are all given by inspiration. To do them justice, some of their music is excellent; and, as the Shakers sing it with great spirit, it sounds well, if the voices are not strained up to an unnatural pitch.

The Shakers are all spiritualists, and they receive continually light and instruction from the spirit-land. With the exception of Shakerism, they represent the immortal world very much the same as the spiritualists of to-day. Good and evil spirits are there; and both classes visit this world,— the former for benevolent, and the latter for evil purposes. Mother Ann has her wine-press, and she sends wine to the most faithful Shakers, and they actually get drunk on the wine of the spiritual kingdom. According to some modern spiritualists, the spirits in the other world, or in another sphere, who love intoxicating drinks, gratify their appetites by entering the bodies of the intemperate here, or by inhaling the vapor of spirit;

and no lock and key can keep them out of wine-cellars, or any place they choose to enter; so the Maine law will not save them, and legislators who are interested in the welfare of spiritualists should take the matter into consideration.

There are only a portion of the Shakers who get drunk on Ann Lee's wine, and they are a class of persons such as may be found everywhere, who are naturally mesmeric subjects, who may be said to be in a negative state or condition, instead of positive, and so they are easily affected, thrown into trances, bewitched, cured of scrofula by seventh sons, and formerly by kings and princes; they see ghosts, and visit the spirit-world; they are quickly excited and alarmed; and men of powerful minds, who are zealous, can excite them to despair, and sway them to and fro, as they please. Meats, cakes and many other things, are sent from the spirit world to the Shakers; and a highly-gifted one, called a Visionist, will take them and pass them round to such as are gifted sufficiently to receive them. The pantomime which follows is most absurd and ridiculous; for they go through all the motions of receiving food, and eating and drinking. The really gifted are, in truth, the negative or mesmeric. The spirits of all nations, times, states and conditions, visit the Shakers; and, for some reason,— and what it is I know not,—it becomes a duty to take in these wandering spirits. Each Shaker will receive a spirit into his

body, and then he is under the control of the spirit he has received, and will act as it directs, or as it was in the habit of doing in this world. The effect is ludicrous in the extreme.

The treatment of dumb animals by the Shakers, their order and neatness, is well worthy of attention and imitation. Strict abstinence from all sexual pleasures is the main idea of their religion. They are the only people of God; for they live free from the "*lusts of the flesh.*" They have "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful *lusts*," and have "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." They are the "hundred and forty-four thousand" who are to follow the Lamb, spoken of in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation.

A number of times I was present, and witnessed their manner of worship. The room in which they held their meetings, was perfectly neat; the floor white, and it had been scrubbed till it shone. On one side of the room were seats for visitors, those out of the gospel. The seats for the Shakers were light, movable benches; and when they danced or marched, the benches were moved back. When the male Shakers entered their place of worship, they all took off their coats, and hung them up on wooden pegs; so there were a hundred coats, all made alike, hung on a hundred pegs, exactly even, and at just such a distance from each other. The Shaker women all had

neat white folded handkerchiefs in their hands, and they held them precisely alike. Part of the room was occupied by the men, and part by the women, there being about three feet between them. They stood in ranks, the men and women face to face. The tallest Shakers were in the centre ranks, the next tallest in the next rank, and so on to the last.

Their exercises, dances, songs and exhortations, vary from Sabbath to Sabbath. Sometimes they sit down on the portable benches, and sit perfectly still; and then arise, and, without noise or confusion, move back the benches, resume their places, and as soon as the singers (some six or eight of the brothers and sisters, who stand apart by themselves) strike up a tune or song, they commence a march or dance. The palms of their hands are held towards their faces, and as they dance or march they swing them up and down in perfect time. Their steps in dancing are very simple; not light and graceful, but the motion might be considered springy walking. They would move towards the centre, and then back, singing,

> "Joyfully we will advance,
> And in his praises sing and dance;
> On the sea of glass we stand,
> With harps of glory in our hand."

This was continued some time, and when they stopped one of the elders made a speech, or gave an exhortation.

After this they had a march, and then a lively dance, with a shuffle. The words sung were, as well as I can remember, the following:

"I love to dance, I love to sing,
I love to be a Shaker;
I never knew the grace of God,
Until I was a Shaker," etc. etc.

When they had danced until they were weary, another elder made a speech, in which he said that Christ required the people to become like little children; and he thought the Shakers were Christ's disciples, because they walked about with the carelessness of little children, instead of being stiff and nicely dressed, and preaching from elegant pulpits. The elder spoke of "*starched, stiffed-up pulpits*," but I presume he meant elegant. "Such ministers and people," said he, "are *carnal*, and not spiritual; they are in a state of *natur*, but we are like little children, and have entered the kingdom; and let us, like them, march on our heavenly way.

They then commenced a circular march, moving in a manner which would show, in their apprehension, that they were really and truly the little children of the kingdom. Their bodies were inclined forward, their arms at right angles, and as they went swinging, teetering and springing along, you would have supposed that their joints were all nicely connected with patent elastic springs, so that they could bob up and down without the

least inconvenience. All the time they were swinging their hands, as though they were very warm, and were bound to keep the air in motion. At times I was strongly inclined to laugh, the whole thing seemed so much like a solemn burlesque; but the sharp eyes of some of the sisters were placed upon me in solemn rebuke, and I endeavored to keep my countenance, and observe due decorum.

Old Antichrist frequently troubles the Shakers, and when he seriously interrupts their spiritual communion and worship, they take measures to drive him off; they will all shake and stamp in the most violent and ridiculous manner, the whole family uniting, old and young. The visionist perceives when he is fairly shaken off and conquered; and then the following song is sung and danced with great animation:

"Come life, — Shaker life!
Come life eternal!
Shake, shake out of me
All that is carnal.
I 'll take nimble steps,
I 'll be a David,
I 'll show Michael twice
How he behaved."

Here is a specimen of an unknown tongue, which is sung as a chorus to some of their songs:

"Vi a lo vi al le,
Vi al le a lando,
Vi al lo vi al le
Vi al le a lando."

While this is being sung, they dance what they call the round dance. They run in a measured step, and suddenly stop, and face about and shuffle. This is continued as long as the singers have the gift; or, in other words, until they are weary.

I could relate many other interesting and absurd things of the Shakers, such as the jerks, dumb devils, mortification gifts, the visits of the devil, the calling in of good spirits, etc.; but perchance the reader will scarcely pardon the digression I have already made. Part of these things I saw, and part I learned from a man who had lived with the Shakers from a child until he was twenty-five. At that age he left them, but still remained at Lebanon.

On the first of November I bade farewell to my new acquaintances, and returned to New York city. I did not so much regret leaving New Lebanon Springs as I might have done at some other season of the year. The frost king had been there, and despoiled the forests of their glory and beauty, and laid the loveliest things low in the dust. The heavy winds went sweeping over the mountains, tearing every leaf from branches which had been clothed in such sweet comeliness; and the trees

trembled and shook in the frosty blast, as though they stood in great fear of the increasing cold, stripped of their coats of beautiful green; and they sent forth on the wings of the rushing tempest a mighty wail over their desolation. I had no heart in this; for it seemed to me that my inner life had come out and daguerreotyped itself upon nature, changing its sweet face, and leaving it in grief and ruin; so I left all those once enchanting scenes in their desolation, and went to Hudson, where I took the boat and sailed down the North river, landing once more in the great city.

Ernest and Irene were married at the time appointed and, agreeably to their wishes, but not according to their expectations, Ernest was immediately offered a partnership with Mr. Dinneford, which he thankfully accepted. He rented, soon after, a neat and commodious house, and took his mother home to live with him. With little inclination to return home, I spent the winter in visiting different cities, staying a few weeks in each. I went to Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington. At the latter place I remained two months, occupying my time in listening to the debates in Congress, visiting places of interest and amusement, and making new and agreeable acquaintances. In April I returned to New York, where I remained until May, boarding with Mr. Brown. At his house I found a pleasant home; but I could not enjoy it, for there was a continual yearning in my soul for

something purer and holier than I had yet tasted,— for mutual, faithful love. Travel, excitement, amusements, books, interesting scenery and friends, would not satisfy the cravings of my nature; I must have something more. I must love and be loved, or seek for happiness in vain. Sometimes I half envied Ernest, and blamed myself for having given up Irene. She was such a pattern of a wife that to dwell in her family for a brief space would make any bachelor discontented with his state of single wretchedness. Mr. Dinneford expressed himself well pleased with Ernest; nevertheless, he said that it was a severe disappointment at the time, for he had set his heart upon having me for a son-in-law, and a partner in business. Ernest and Irene often rallied me on my dejected appearance, but I kept the cause thereof to myself. That they surmised it I half suspected.

I was so well pleased with the scenery at Lebanon, in the autumn, that I resolved to return in the spring. May I regarded as a fitting season. When I sailed up the Hudson the trees were in blossom, and the young leaves were richly enrobing the branches, where gay birds poured forth gushes of song and glad melody, which made the woods and fields and glens to ring and rejoice with music. When I arrived at the Springs the season was more backward. But the fields were green, and the buds, on a million naked trees, were just ready to open, and clothe them all in robes of virgin purity and

beauty. But what availed all this beautiful scenery? It did not fill up that aching void. I was as restless as Noah's dove, when she swept over the vast expanse of waters, but could find no rest. I had received letters from home, urging me to cease my wanderings and return to those who would give me a fond welcome. I resolved to go.

On the twentieth of May I left Lebanon, and travelled to Boston, by the way of Pittsfield, finding much to interest me in old Berkshire, the roughest and healthiest county in the Bay State. In Berkshire the scenery is wild and grand. It was interesting and awe-inspiring to gaze upon those old mountains, which have stood from century to century, resting their heads against the sky, and washing their wild locks in the waters of the storm and thunder-cloud. The air was bracing and strengthening. Sweeping down, pure and fresh, from the jagged hills and mountains, it was very refreshing and reviving to one who had spent months in cities.

At home I received a most cordial welcome. Mrs. Stewart actually wept for joy. Contrary to my expectations, I there found Helen Means. She was on a visit to Mrs. Stewart, which was to extend to a number of weeks. I was too happy to see her again to feign coldness; and, had I wished it, I should have found it a difficult task. I could not doubt that she was truly glad to see me, for it was evident that she found it difficult to

refrain from weeping. Laboring on the farm, and with her society, and that of my brothers and sisters, and Mrs. Stewart's motherly care, my time passed very agreeably. A few weeks spent in the company of Helen convinced me, more and more, how utterly impossible it was to expect happiness in this world unless she became my wife. I might endure life while she remained single — but if she should marry another! — the very thought was madness. But what had I to hope? She had twice refused me, and I had pledged myself not to urge my suit again; and yet I could not for a moment forego the idea that I should yet win the priceless jewel.

While Helen remained I was measurably contented, but as soon as she was gone I found life a burden. In vain I cultivated the acquaintance of the young ladies in the neighborhood; in vain I sought relief in interesting books,— in procuring the newest and most fashionable novels,— all would not do. Previous to Helen's departure, she asked me if the year was not almost gone, and invited me to visit them very soon. I resolved that I would do so as soon as we should have finished haying. I might have gone before, but my pride held me back.

CHAPTER XXV.

HELEN MEANS AND MYSELF.

DURING my absence, Deacon Webber had grown so ugly and miserly that even his own children, such perfect chips of the old block, could not live with him. He now occupied his house alone. I met him, one day, on my way to the village, and I was surprised to see the change which one year had wrought. His form was bent, and his clothes ragged and filthy. He had not cut his gray, stiff beard for months. With his malignant eyes, hollow cheeks, wrinkled forehead, swarthy skin, and long, gray beard, half covering his thin, dry lips, his uncombed hair, and the filth and dirt which clung to his ragged garments, hands and face, he was a horrible sight to look upon. Though his appearance was disgusting in the extreme, I could but pity the poor wretch. As much as I had hated him, as much as I now despised him, he had fallen so low that I did not wish to harm a hair of his head. He had become a general object of loathing, and I would sooner have done him a kindness than to have inflicted an injury.

He recognized me, and a fiend could not have gathered more of hatred and malignity in his countenance. His brow darkened, his eyes gleamed with the fiercest fires of brutal revenge, and his lips seemed ready to spit out venom and spite. Unmoved, except with disgust, I passed by him; but I could hear him grind his teeth and growl for some time after I had left him. He looked as though he would be glad to spring upon me, and, like a wild beast, tear me limb from limb. And this was the pious, praying deacon; the "burning and shining light." This was the man who had so often doomed his fellow-creatures to inconceivable torments; and now what a doom was his! All the time he was professing godliness he was a pharisaical hypocrite, and it had given him the heart of a devil; and he who has such a heart is in the lowest hell, whether in this world or another.

The deacon's whole object now was to accumulate property. Gold was his god, and all his vows were paid at its altar. He lent money, took mortgages of lands and buildings, and, as his creditors often failed to redeem them, his property rapidly increased. He sold for ready money nearly every article of household furniture, beds, and bedding, and then lived more like a brute than a man. He afterwards rented the house, all but one room. His children continued to show him the respect which is due from a child to a parent, not from love, but that they might inherit his fortune. A number of excuses

were given for leaving him, but the true one was kept out of sight.

In September I again visited my uncle. I was received with that familiarity and kindness which parents bestow upon children. They had always treated me like a child. The only reception which seemed at all cold was from my uncle, on my first return from New York. Some days then passed away before I could feel as easy in his company as formerly. There was no change in my aunt; and now she expressed much anxiety in relation to my health, and begged me to stay and let her doctor me, until I should get rid of that pale, languid look, and bring back the color and sprightliness which I once possessed. I required but little urging to comply, for I could dwell in the presence of one whose attractive loveliness increased with every hour. To be near her was now my greatest happiness. By her side I could sit for hours, though not one word was spoken. To catch one glance of her beautiful eyes, or feel the touch of her hand, which thrilled my whole being, was a pleasure which I sought elsewhere in vain. So intense and all-absorbing was my love, that I could have died for her; but to live without her was worse than dying.

In spite of my aunt's motherly care and nursing, my health, instead of improving, was every day growing more precarious. In vain she prepared me strengthening syrups, and labored with a mother's care and anxiety to

bring back my lost health and spirits. In the presence of Helen there were moments of intense happiness; but every moment only made me so much the more anxious to press her to my heart, and hear her whisper the dear words, "I am thine!" She engaged all my thoughts, all my wishes, and all my hopes; and yet I was debarred the privilege of asking her to crown my long and ardent devotion with her love. I knew not what to do, and sometimes indulged in bitter thoughts against her who was dearer to me than my own life. Helen seemed to grow restless and uneasy, and I often caught her eyes fixed earnestly upon me. But those eyes had before deceived me, or I was unable to read their language; and how could I hope to understand them now? My uncle, too, often regarded me with an inquiring and troubled look.

After two or three weeks of miserable doubt and suspense, the most bitter thoughts began to rankle in my heart, and the result was that Helen's society, in a measure, lost its charm. She noticed it, and, as I thought, tried to throw around me a witchery that I could not resist. I thought she must be a coquette, and kept aloof from her as much as possible. When in her society, I was moody and silent. I resolved to return home. I named the day, but, in accordance with my uncle's wishes, postponed the time one week; but I resolved that Helen should not profit by it, for I would

absent myself from her as much as I could conveniently, and when with her talk as little as possible. The consequences were that I was all repulsion, and she all attraction. An almost irresistible charm hung around her, and it was with extreme difficulty that I could overcome its power. She sometimes seemed as though she would be glad to open her heart, and tell me all its desires and hopes; but I repelled her with all the strength I could muster. "Surely," thought I, "she is a complete coquette." I often reflected upon the utter impossibility of Helen Means being a coquette; but how else could I account for her present conduct?

My last week of probation had nearly expired. In two days more I should return home, and remain until the marriage of Thomas and Lizzie, which would take place the next month; and then I would go I knew not and cared not whither. To get away from myself would be my greatest desire. O, it is a sad thing for the young heart to be so overburdened that it would gladly escape from its own thoughts, and forget its own identity! Many a one flies from home, friends, and from all that 's dear,—from every object loved, around which memory clings,—as the startled fawn flies from the hunter and the hound. He goes out into the great wilderness-world, not to find joy, peace or happiness, but that he may leave the pangs of disappointment and broken hopes far, far behind, or drown them in excitement, and charm

them away with new scenes and new faces. I, too, would go, and long years should pass away ere I again returned. The image of her I loved so well I would tear from my heart, and tread it under my feet. The blissful hours and blessed moments which had so cheered us in the bright past, and which now filled memory's halls with beautiful forms and diviner shapes, should, every one of them, hasten away; and I would crowd them with delights drawn from new scenes and new hopes.

Day had once more said good-night to the world, and the evening shadows again marshalled their dusky troops to cover the earth with darkness. Twilight lingered long, as if unwilling to turn away its rosy face from such an enchanting scene. It was glorious; for a gorgeous autumnal sunset had poured upon the world a billowy flood of golden smiles. The great king of light went down encircled with glory,— as goes the good man to his rest, when his work on earth is done,— and the lingering red of the western sky faded into the clear blue. And now the harvest moon, the lovely queen of night, rode proudly on high, making the white clouds her chariot, and decking it with stars. As she swept through the skies, she marshalled her armies of light and beauty, and sent them forth on their nightly errand of love and peace to every child of humanity who will, but look up and drink in their smiles, and open his ears to the music of

the heavenly hosts! O, how magnificent were the clouds, sailing through the heavens with the grace and majesty of mighty worlds! Some were red, rosy and white, and others were blue and orange, and some seemed to catch all the hues of the rainbow, blending them in most wondrous beauty.

But, although the evening was so delightful and soul-inspiring, I was in no mood to enjoy it. I could not close my eyes to its glories, nor entirely shut out its hallowing influences from my heart; neither could I enter into the fulness of its delights. I was shut out, for a time, from the innermost of nature's sanctuary,— from the holy of holies. I love nature at all seasons; and my way has never yet been so utterly dark but that her light could scatter some of the shadows. There have been times when I have turned away from the faces of men, but *never* from the benignant face of God, smiling from his works.

When twilight had entirely disappeared, and night once more reigned over the earth, and the tall trees had daguerreotyped themselves upon the ground which they overshadowed, and were looking down with pride at their forms of beauty, as they reposed in the moonlight, sad and unquiet at heart, and so unfitted for such scenes of beauty, I took a candle and book, and retired to the parlor, to read. After seeking, in vain, to fix my mind upon the subject of the writer, I

laid it down, and leaned my head upon my hand, and gave loose rein to my burdened thoughts. While thus employed, a light step approached me. I knew that it was Helen, but I did not lift my head. She came near me, and laid her hand upon my shoulder, and said,

"This is a beautiful evening, Henri!"

"It is well enough," I replied.

"Is that all?"

"As much more as you please."

She paused a moment, and then said,

"Is it right to spend such an evening alone, when your friends desire your company?"

"That depends upon circumstances. But I have not been alone; would to heaven I had!"

"Who were your companions, then?"

"My own thoughts."

"They should be pleasant, as you prefer their company to any other."

"There you mistake, for I am weary of them; they make me ever so wretched."

"Why harbor them, then?"

"For a very simple reason; I cannot help it."

"May I know what they are?"

"No!"

"Why not, Henri?"

"Because I cannot tell you; and if I could, I would not!"

She seemed a little disconcerted, and walked to the window a moment, and then returned to my side again, saying,

"It is very beautiful to-night;— will not the morning be pleasant?"

"Most likely."

"We used to ramble, once, at early dawn. Will you walk with me in the morning?"

"I am not very anxious for a walk myself; but, if you particularly desire my company, I will attend you."

When I uttered these words, she sighed deeply; and I looked up, for the first time since she came into the room. She was gazing at me, and a sad expression rested upon her countenance.

"Shall I play and sing to you?" she inquired.

"If you wish."

"Not without you desire it."

"I'm fond of music, you know."

"But not when I make it."

"That's your own inference."

"O, Henri!"

"Say on."

She now raised her hand and brushed away a bright tear, lingered a moment, seemingly making an effort to speak; she then arose and opened the piano, swept her fingers across the keys, and played a beautiful but simple air, that she had often sung to me when a child.

She then sung, in touching and thrilling tones, the following words:

The heart is cold that 's dear to me,
The heart I yearn to call my own;
For when I touch the magic key,
It gives not back an answering tone.

It turns away from true love's shrine,
While I in sorrow linger there,
And long to whisper "Make me thine,"
But fear to breathe the heartfelt prayer.

How well I love the bending skies,
The dimpled waves of golden light,
And all the glad and starry eyes
That pierce the sombre veil of night!

The hills and dales with verdure clad,
The brooklets leaping through the dell,
The birds with notes so full and glad,
Or soft as evening's vesper-bell!

The leafy trees, that charm the eye
With worlds of gems at early dawn,
As though they 'd lift them to the sky,
To glitter when the night comes on!

The rivers winding to the sea,
The flowers that blush o'er all the plain,
The zephyrs whispering lovingly,
To cool the throbbing brow of pain!

Nature is ever bright and fair ;
And, though I love her passing well,
Yet in my heart are lines of care,
And yearnings that I may not tell.

O, what is all the world to me
Without the heart that should be mine ?
But one fond look, then trustingly
I 'll lay my trembling hand in thine !

A few lines were sufficient to call my attention to the thoughts of the singer, and to draw me to her side. When she had finished, she turned her head, and fixed those soul-speaking eyes, with all their light and love, full upon me. For a moment I was charmed and enraptured,— full of great hope,— and then a shadowy cloud came and stood between me and the object of my adoration, shutting off the light of those truthful eyes, which I so much needed to revive and strengthen my fainting heart. I thought of the moments in the past, when I had been so intoxicated with that thrilling and melting glance, that I had almost worshipped the source from whence it sprung. Twice had it caused me to declare my love, and earnestly seek a return of my most devoted affection, and each time I had been firmly rejected. I again thought she must be a coquette. In my mind I compared her to the serpent that charms but to destroy.

When these feelings had taken strong possession of my heart, I left her side, and seated myself upon the

sofa in moody silence. She seemed irresolute for a moment; then she arose and came and stood near me, and said, while a sweet, sad smile played around her eyes,

"You think ill of me, Henri!"

"Helen," I replied, "I despise an untruth; and, if I did not, it would be in vain to deny what you allege, for actions speak louder than words."

"Very true; for, had you denied it, I should have doubted even *your word*. Now, Henri, you have one duty to perform, which must not be longer delayed; you must give me your reasons for this."

"Is that my duty?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"I have not given it sufficient thought to be able to tell."

"It does not require thought; a moment's reflection is sufficient. Think of the happy hours of the past,—the relations which have existed between us, and which should exist now;—of what the future may have in store for us, and then answer to your own conscience if you should not tell me all!"

"I will tell you, Helen, since you so much desire it. You remember that twice have I offered you my heart and hand, believing, each time, that you would answer me favorably. When you last rejected me I desired you to take time to consider, telling you that I never should

make you another offer. You wished for no time, but decided at once. That I love you deeply, devotedly, you do not doubt. That I ought to break the cords that bind me in hopeless love, is equally certain. And, though I cannot sever a single shred, nor drive for a moment from my breast the passionate love that is wearing me to the grave, you still keep up that witching spell that first charmed me into love, and which draws the cords still closer around my heart!"

"If I do as you say, do you regard it as done intentionally?"

"I cannot doubt it!"

"And what is your inference?"

"That you are a coquette!"

"You shall know me better!"

"I would gladly do so!"

"You have been very plain with me, Henri, and I will be equally plain with you. Although you have regarded me as a coquette, still you have ever been very dear to me! I have but few friends, and those I love most dearly; but you I love more than them all! You have thought that I could wantonly trifle with your holiest affections! Do you think that I would knowingly injure your kind uncle and aunt, who have been more than parents to me; or the good, dear Mrs. Stewart, who has ever been like a mother? How, then, could I wantonly injure you, when I love you more than they?"

"Then I have judged you wrongly!"

"And you shall have still stronger proofs. As I have twice rejected you, you may now reject me; but, if ever I am led to the altar, your hand alone shall lead me! If ever I give my heart and hand to another, you alone shall receive them!"

"O, Helen!" I replied to these enrapturing words, "can you mean all this?"

"Must I repeat it again, in order to convince your unbelieving heart?"

"I am satisfied, dearest!" I answered, folding her to my breast. There was no shrinking away now,—no half-suppressed desire to tear herself from my arms. That long and passionate embrace was mutual, looking love from eyes humid with their burden of too intense happiness, and breathing out deep sighs,—for spoken words would have been but a mockery,—and uttering the heart's own language in burning kisses. I cannot describe the thrilling rapture of that moment! Worlds of joy seemed to come pouring into our hearts, making them like heaven in the intensity of their bliss! But I must stop here, for words are poor things when used to describe the mightier emotions of the heart, whether they be of joy or sorrow. Perchance the reader will say that I should have drawn the veil of silence over this scene, rather than have exposed it to the gaze of those who cannot appreciate it.

Not many minutes had passed away, before I was thinking of what might be the real import of the words she had uttered, even while I held her heart beating against my own. But other thoughts, beautiful as morning, sweet as the breath of June, and brightly tinted as a rainbow, were stirring the long pent-up emotions of my heart; and then was no time to talk or seek explanations. Lovers are never in the possession of such heart-full happiness as when they find no use for words, and their utterance would be like harsh discord in the midst of sweet harmony. She was the first to speak.

"You would know more, Henri?" she said.

"You have read my thoughts," I replied. "You said that, if ever you gave your heart and hand to another, I alone should receive them. Did you mean they should be mine whenever I chose to claim them?"

"Yes, dearest, they are yours *now* and evermore."

"Then I am satisfied, and will query no more."

"Nay, but you *should* query more and *now;* for we should understand each other, that there may be nothing to mar the happiness of the future."

"You must explain, for I know not to what you refer."

"Is there nothing in the past that is dark or mysterious? Are there no problems you would have solved?"

Quickly now came rushing upon me the thought of her

twice refusing me,—of her intimation that she did not love me; and I felt that an explanation was needed.

"Yes, there are, Helen; and it is well, as you say, that they should be solved now. Tell me why you twice rejected me, and if you really meant that you did not love me."

"Do you think that I would be guilty of deception?"

"No, and that is what puzzles me."

"I have thought that, if ever I was guilty of falsehood and deception in my life, it was when I gave you the impression that I did not love you. But you shall be my judge. Can we truly say that we love, unless we have perfect confidence in the objects of our affection? Is it love, in its highest and holiest sense, if we are sometimes fearful that they will not always be true to us?"

"Under such circumstances, we could not love with that perfect love such as you or I should require."

"Then I had not perfect love for you; for I lacked confidence in the strength of your attachment."

"And I alone was to blame for that."

"I am glad to hear you say it; for it is the truth. When I learned of your engagement to another, I could hardly believe your own words; for I had felt that our destinies were so linked and intertwined that they could not be separated. You had never breathed of love, but still I hoped that we understood each other. I well knew that I could never love another as I had loved you,

and I determined never to marry. I had been very happy, ever since I was blessed, through your instrumentality, with my present peaceful home. The loss of your dear society I deeply regretted; but I had hoped that our separation might be short. I cannot tell the anguish which your engagement caused me, and I would not dwell upon it now. A load of misery was removed from my heart when that engagement terminated. But soon came the thought that your attachments were weak, and would not last. I could not trust you, as I had before; and I felt that I did not truly love."

"That is all natural enough; but I think the test was too severe, as I had given up Irene entirely for you."

"You have not yet learned all, and I shall impart to you the information only on one condition."

"I trust it is not hard."

"Very simple. You shall promise a full pardon to all concerned."

"That is easily done. To-night I could pardon, with all my heart, the bitterest enemy I have in the world."

"You promise, then?"

"I do."

"I will be brief as I can. Your uncle, I think, regretted your engagement with Miss Dinneford nearly as much as I. He was, as he told me afterwards, sadly disappointed. He had fondly hoped to see us united in holy wedlock. When he learned that you were no longer

betrothed to Miss Dinneford, he said that you were so changeable and fickle that you could not be trusted. He should not be surprised if I received an offer of marriage from you; but, knowing that I had already suffered bitterly, and as he loved me as well as though I was his own child, he wished me to give you no encouragement until there had been sufficient time to test the strength of your attachments. As he had ever been so kind to me,— more than a father to the poor outcast,— as I knew his heart was brimming with kindness and his head filled with wisdom, I desired to be guided by his wishes,— to make them, so far as consistent, my law. I promised him not to give you a favorable answer until I had his permission, unless I thought it a solemn duty to act otherwise. It was not so difficult a matter to make this promise; for I was as sceptical as he. A few days since, your uncle released me from my bond."

"The old Shylock! He must have his 'pound of flesh!'"

"I think he has held on too long; but he meant well."

"But there was an *if*. Why did you not take advantage of it? I am almost vexed with you, Helen, that you did not do so long ago; for I gave you every reason to trust me."

"Don't say vexed, Henri. I have been satisfied since your return; but I was not before. I was fearful that, if easily won, I might be easily cast aside. And your

earnestness, after I had refused you, did not change the matter at all; for I knew that your nature could not brook a defeat, and that it would not, if it were possible to prevent it. Opposition to your wishes, I well knew, would only stimulate you to greater exertions."

"O, you little sceptic! I would not have thought it."

"Well, you will learn all about me, by and by."

"I hope so; and when you know me better, there will be no more doubts. But how much longer should you have held on to that odious promise? I should have thought you would have felt it your duty to have broken it, when I met you at my home."

"I was placed in a delicate position, for I must be the suitor, and not you; and, besides, I wished your good uncle's full approval, But, if he had continued stubborn another week, I should have felt it my duty to make known to you that your love was returned, and I would have done so."

"I believe, yea, I *know*, that uncle has a kind heart, and that his intentions were good; so I will cheerfully forgive him. But, like many other well-meaning but mistaken people, he has caused much needless suffering."

"You spoke of doubts departing when I knew you better; they are all gone now, never to return."

"Bless you for those cheering words, and may Heaven grant that I may be ever worthy of your confidence and love!"

"If we are but faithful to the inner light, heaven's choicest blessings will be ours."

"With your love, dearest, to shield me when the tempter comes, I believe that I can conquer, and nearly all the time be very good."

"We may strengthen each other, I doubt not."

"And so be brave and happy. O, Helen! I never can be too thankful that heaven has blessed me with your dear love."

"And our mutual constancy, peace and joy, will best manifest our gratitude!"

"Then I trust that we may offer up a perpetual sacrifice. But, tell me why you were so decided in your refusals. You acted as though it was a matter of perfect indifference to you."

"The reason is evident. If I had not been decided, I could not have been faithful to my promise."

"I am satisfied, Helen. I understand it all. The enigmas are all solved; and perhaps it is well that we have been subjected to this trial,—at least, I will try and think so. My present happiness is abundantly sufficient to compensate for what I have lost in the past. The future, I *know*, will be joyous as heaven."

"A perpetual spring-time, a life-long summer of the heart!"

"And, though we are sometimes visited with afflic-

tions, that make sad for a season, may they be like 'dark-eyed autumn,' beautiful even in its sadness!"

"Bless you for the thought! We must all experience some sorrows, and meet with some disappointments. But the faithful need not fear them, for they shall only make them stronger."

"I would that I were as strong as you are,—as free from evil thoughts and evil passions!"

"Nay, I am weak, as well as you; but in God shall be our trust!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

THE next morning, my uncle, with mock gravity, congratulated me upon my improved appearance; then turned to Helen, and told her she should have known better than to keep me up so late, for it was a well-established fact that invalids required more rest and sleep than persons who were free from disease. He hoped she would remember this in the future. My aunt, the good soul, laughed, and said, "No matter about established facts;—if a course of treatment produces good results, and restores the patient, that is enough."

A conversation of a more serious nature succeeded this pleasant raillery. Uncle and aunt proposed that when we were married we should live with them; and they would make over the farm to us, to be ours at their decease. I objected, on account of Mrs. Stewart; but they said the house was large enough for all, and that Mrs. Stewart should be welcome whenever she wished to change her home. We made a conditional agreement, which might have been carried into effect, had

not an event happened which caused us to entirely change our plan.

At the appointed time, Thomas and Lizzie were married. They immediately left for their future home. Thomas and Mr. Harvey, the husband of Lizzie, a brother to Thomas' wife, had purchased a paper-mill of Mr. Harvey's father; and they had formed a partnership with a Mr. Vinton, also a brother-in-law, for the purpose of manufacturing paper. As I had determined to turn my attention to farming, it was the desire of Thomas and the rest of the family that I should retain the homestead. Mrs. Stewart seemed anxious that I should do so. On the other hand, Helen was desirous that I should comply with uncle's request, though she was willing to do as I thought best. I was halting between two opinions, when an unexpected development caused me to decide.

We were married, at my uncle's, in the following November. A large number of friends came to celebrate the happy event, and to bless us with their smiles and good wishes. Among the rest were Ernest and Irene Brown; or, as she wrote her name, Irene Dinneford Brown. They performed the parts of bridegroom and bridesmaid, as I had promised Ernest when he little suspected my meaning.

We returned with them to New York, on a marriage tour. We were in the city, at a hotel, when the start-

ling revelation was made which rendered our future course perfectly clear. Previous to the development, Helen had related to me a somewhat remarkable vision, or dream. She said that a good and benevolent looking man came to her, and laid his hand upon her head in benediction. His eyes were blue, and looked spiritual and holy, as they were fixed upon her. A smile full of sweetness and satisfaction played upon his benignant face.

He said, "Do you remember me?"

"I have a faint recollection of you," she answered; "I saw you when I was a little child."

"Who am I?"

"My father! But you have long been dead, and I had forgotten you!"

"I am your father, my child! And your mother,—would you know of her?"

"My mother! Where is she — with the living or the dead?"

"She lives, my child, and mourns thy loss! Go and comfort her!"

"Mourns for me? O, tell me where she is, that I may fly to her arms, and gladden her heart by the sight of her child!"

"Thy prayer shall be granted! Follow me!"

"He led me into the next room, and pointed me to a pale and sickly looking man, who lay, in a disturbed

slumber, upon the bed. I looked at him attentively, and I saw that it was the melancholy invalid whom we had met at table, and had seen going in and out of the next room. He who had seemed my father said, 'Be like a child to him, and he shall direct thee to thy mother!' I was about to ask her name, when I awoke."

This dream made a deep impression upon Helen. She said she had often doubted whether those whom she had regarded as her parents were really so. She never recollected of having that love which a child should feel for a parent. And sometimes dim and confused thoughts had come crowding upon her, the cause of which she had sought for in vain. They ever ran upon one subject,—a country home, and a lady who seemed very near and dear to her. I tried to persuade her that it was because her parents had not treated her kindly; and, after placing her at Deacon Webber's, had apparently forgotten her.

"You are mistaken," she said; "for when I awoke from my dream I immediately travelled back in thought to the time when I was a little child, before I lived with Mr. Means; and I then lived with a dear, good woman, who was my mother. I am sure that it was in the country; I can see the spot now. And, unless I have had a previous existence, according to the faith of some, and had such a home then, it was my home in my early childhood!"

"Well, Helen," I replied, "as we are to start for home to-day, what can you do for the sick man?"

"We must not go to-day; I dare not! Do stay one day more!"

"It shall be as you say; and a week, if you wish."

In the afternoon the sick man was taken bleeding at the lungs. The hemorrhage was so severe that a physician who was called said he could not live but a few days, at most. I knew that he was a stranger, and I readily assented to Helen's request, that she should be his nurse. She attended him with all the faithfulness of a wife or daughter, and his gratitude was unbounded. Three days after the hemorrhage had been checked, and, as he had recovered somewhat from the exhaustion which it caused, he expressed a desire to see me alone. With my curiosity very much excited, I obeyed the summons.

I found him propped up with pillows, and looking pale and ghastly. He addressed me thus:

"I have learned, from your inestimable lady, that your name is Henri Eaton, and that you are from ——, Mass."

I nodded assent.

"I feel," he continued, "that I have not long to live; and I wish to confide a sacred trust to you. Are you willing to accept it?"

"I am."

"My name is Edgar Austin. I have neither father,

mother, brother, sister, wife or child, living. You see I am alone in the world; and, therefore, I doubly appreciate the kindness which you and your lady have shown me. I once had a brother. He was older than I, and of an overbearing, jealous disposition. He was passionate and unforgiving. Such was his treatment of me, that I had but little love for him, and seldom visited him. Some fifteen years since, as I had not seen him for four years, and as he had married in the time, I resolved to pay him a visit. Not knowing what the reception might be,—for we had parted in anger,—I left my horse at the tavern, about a mile from my brother's, and went the rest of the way on foot. In order to shorten the distance, I concluded to leave the road, and pass through a piece of woodland near my brother's house. I had gone about half-way through, when I discovered, a few rods from me, a man and a little girl. I stopped, to learn if the man was not my brother. In a moment I was satisfied that it was he; but judge of my surprise and horror, to see him pick up a stone, and strike the little girl upon the head, which laid her bleeding at his feet! The monster then knelt down to see if she breathed, laid his hand upon her heart, and felt of her pulse. He then threw her into a hole some three feet deep, which had the appearance of having been dug some months before. He now set to work gathering leaves, and pieces of rotten wood, which he threw on to her.

"So astounded was I to behold him commit such an atrocious deed, that the moment he struck the blow I was half paralyzed, so that I did not move. But, had he offered to strike her again, I think I should have thrown off my paralysis, and rushed to her rescue. But a moment's reflection taught me that to keep still would be the surest way to save the child. I knew that, if I met my brother then, a deadly encounter would be the result; and, as he was much the stronger, I was fearful that I should be overcome, and to save himself he would take my life.

"When the wretch had completely covered her over, he ran, with great speed, towards his house. When I could no longer hear the sound of his heavy footsteps, I lost not a moment in hastening to where the child lay, and removing the rubbish that covered her. Poor little thing! how still she lay, and how pale and bloody she was! for the blood was still running from the deep gash upon her head.

"Having travelled much, and been an invalid for years, I had paid some attention to medicine, and never went any distance without carrying some with me. I had some drops in my pocket, which I applied to her nose and mouth. While thus employed I heard footsteps, and I rightly surmised that the murderer was returning. As quick as thought I snatched her up, and darted into some thick bushes near by, resolved to fight

the monster, if he discovered me. It was a relief to see him commence throwing in the loose gravel,—for he brought a spade with him,—without looking into the grave. In a brief space he filled up the hole, then levelled it down, and trod upon it with his feet. He then brought leaves, and decayed vegetable matter, and spread upon the spot, making the ground to look as though it had not lately been stirred. During this time, although he worked in great haste, he would frequently stop and listen, and, with a half-frightened look, gaze in every direction, as though he was fearful some one was approaching. When, as he thought, he had fully accomplished his diabolical purpose, he returned home.

"I was now determined to restore the child to life, if possible. I poured the drops into her mouth, chafed her hands, face and stomach, and used every means in my power to restore her. In a brief period I was repaid a thousand times, by beholding signs of returning animation. She soon began to moan piteously; but, removing her still further from the hated spot, and from the house of my brother, lest he might hear her, I laid her down by the side of a little creek, and washed the blood from her head and face, and tied up the wound with my handkerchief. I then soothed her to sleep. It was now quite dark; and I took her in my arms, and carried her beyond the hotel, and laid her down in a field, near the road. I then hastily returned for my horse, rode to

where I had left the child, took her in, and drove rapidly away.

"I now began to ask myself, seriously, what I should do with the child. Some fifteen miles from where I then was lived a surgeon, with whom I was intimately acquainted. I resolved to drive to his house with all speed; for I thought the wound should be dressed with as little delay as possible. I was so fortunate as to find him at home. I told him that I had a little girl with me who had fallen out of the chaise and hurt her head badly, but I hoped not fatally. He examined her wound, and dressed it, and said there was no danger if it was properly attended to. I remained there three days, when, with his consent, I carried the little girl to Boston, and, in a short time, her wound was perfectly healed.

"It was my desire, now, to restore the child to her parents, if I could find them; but I did not wish to endanger the life and liberty of my brother, for I feared the disgrace. It might be possible that she had lived with him, he having taken her from the poor-house, or from some destitute family; or, perchance, she was a child of shame, and, possibly, his own. I met with one difficulty which I had not anticipated. When I asked the little girl her name, she could not tell me. She seemed to try to think, but, after a while, burst into tears. The blow upon her head had affected her memory. I then resolved to visit the neighborhood where my brother

resided, and, if any little child was missing, restore her to the parents, and invent some story in relation to her, so as to shield myself and brother. But, as I was about to start on a foreign tour, and the ship being unexpectedly ready to sail, I could not go without much inconvenience and expense. I then procured a place for her with a poor family, where she could board cheap; and, paying for her board for one year, set sail for Liverpool. It so happened that business detained me a number of years; but I continued to make remittances, from year to year, for the support of the child, until I returned to Boston. When I did return, the family was not to be found, and I have sought in vain to trace them.

"I now feel that it was an unpardonable offence in consenting to leave Boston, on any consideration, without making an effort to find her parents. You live in the town adjoining where my brother resided. I am extremely anxious that the girl, if living, should be found. I have property to the amount of seven thousand five hundred dollars, which I shall give to her. The whole business I must intrust in your hands, and I will make ample provision for your trouble and expense. Five hundred dollars out of my estate I have reserved for that purpose, with a provision in the will that more shall be used, if required. You must first learn who were her parents, and then advertise for her until you find her. I should have done it, ere now, but one of my most fatal propensities

was to put off sacred duties to a more convenient season. By giving way to this feeling, I have lost many opportunities of doing good, and have left a burden upon my own heart which now I am little able to bear. My brother is dead, and I have never been to the town where he lived since I learned that in his heart he was a murderer!"

"Your story," I remarked, "is a strange one," hardly able to suppress my agitation. "Did you give the child a name?"

"No, for I thought that in a short time her memory might be restored to her; and I left orders that, if she ever told her name, search should be made for her parents, and she restored to them. But Means was a poor, shiftless fellow."

"Means, did you say?"

"Yes, that was the name of the family where I placed her to board."

"It is she!" I exclaimed, without being aware that I was thinking aloud. "It is my Helen! God be thanked!"

"What are you talking about?" he inquired, raising his head, quickly. "Of whom do you speak? What Helen do you refer to?"

"Calm yourself, my dear sir," I replied, far from being in that state myself. "I have good reasons for believing that the lost child and my wife are the same."

"Impossible! What proof have you, sir? For God's sake tell me!"

"I beg of you to be calm, or I cannot proceed. Too much excitement may cause death immediately."

"Well, you are right. I will be calm; only give me the proof, which you should have, before making such a statement to a dying man. Unless you give me such proof, I shall believe you a villain, seeking, by false pretensions, to get into your possession the property I have given to another."

"You are suspicious of me, sir; but I pardon you. Listen patiently, and you shall know all."

I gave him a clear, simple and distinct account of all the facts in the case. These facts the reader is already acquainted with, but I will briefly allude to them. Mrs. Stewart lived near the brother of the sick man, and her little girl mysteriously disappeared; and, a few months afterwards, this brother confessed that he was her murderer. Helen Means had lived in Boston, with her parents, as she supposed, previous to living with Deacon Webber. The night on which Helen came to my mother's, dressed in a suit of my clothes, Mrs. Stewart was much agitated when Helen gave her a grateful look for the kind words she had spoken to her. Once or twice afterwards the same thing had occurred. Many doubts had crept into the mind of Helen in relation to her parents, and her thoughts went beyond her home in Bos-

ton, to a pleasant little home in the country. Mr. Austin, our sick friend, saw his brother strike the child, and throw her into a hole intended for her grave. But he saved her, restored her to life, and placed her to board with a family by the name of Means. With this chain of facts there was no room for doubt. When I had finished, he exclaimed,

"God be praised! The proof is as clear as light. Now I can die in peace. The mother will again embrace her long-lost child, and my property will be amply sufficient to make her old age cheerful; and I shall atone, in a measure, for the wrong I have done."

"You must remember, my dear sir, that you saved the life of the noble being who is now my wife."

"I do remember it; but I only did my duty, and that does not justify my neglect of duty afterwards."

"It will be well to let that pass out of your mind. We all owe you very much. Helen was restored to life by you, and she is unconsciously doing something to repay the debt she owes you, by smoothing your way to the tomb."

"She has been very kind, and it brings consolation to my heart; for it seems as though God had sent her to me to solace my last hours, and assure me of forgiveness."

"A beautiful thought, and I am glad that it has come

to you; for it will do you good. She must seem like a dear child to you."

"You are very good. I do not doubt what you have told me, sir; but I wish to see your wife alone."

In accordance with his wishes, I rang for Helen, and when she came I left the room. I was recalled in the course of half an hour. I found Helen's face streaming with tears, and yet its expression was the most thankful, heavenly and beautiful, that I ever witnessed. It seemed like a transfiguration, it was so glorious. The sick man gazed upon her as though she had been an angel sent from heaven to guide him through the valley of the shadow of death.

Helen rejoiced to learn that Mrs. Stewart was her mother, for she knew that the knowledge of the fact would be heaven to her; and then she loved her so well, and could now love her still more dearly. She was thankful that it had been so ordered that she should be with her preserver in his last hours, to hear the truth from his own lips, and smooth, with loving hands, the bed of sickness and death. She wept that she must part with him so soon, but they were tears of reconciliation.

It was beautiful to witness the mutual faith and trust which were now manifested. He called her his child — his dear child — and wanted her ever near him. She anticipated every want, and held him by the hand, and

gently chafed his forehead, and addressed to him words of affection and filial endearment.

"Shall I bathe your head, father?" she would ask.

"Yes, dear child," would be the reply.

And so it was, all day long, and all night long, except when he slept, or she absented herself for a brief repose.

After lingering for a few days, he slept the sleep of death, closing his eyes in holy calmness, and bidding us an affectionate farewell.

"O, Lelia!" said he; "sweet and angelic has been your care for me, and on the wings of your beautiful and heavenly love shall my soul be lifted to God!"

At our request, the families of Mr. Dinneford and Mr. Brown united with us in the last sad offices of respect and love. We followed him to his grave, and stood over it and wept; and when we retraced our steps there were tears in our eyes, but smiles in our hearts.

We remained in New York a few days longer, keeping perfectly quiet, that Helen might recruit her wasted energies; and then, with chastened feelings and a larger faith, we started for home.

Mrs. Stewart received us with the most endearing affection; and, after embracing us both, she said,

"I hope, my dear children, that you have now decided to make this your home."

"Yes, dear mother," I answered, "we have. We

shall gladly live with you, and beautiful shall be your life with us."

I uttered these words with the greatest difficulty, and Helen trembled like a leaf, and she leaned heavily upon me for support, and the tears fell rapidly which she struggled in vain to suppress. She would have sprang into her mother's arms, but I gently restrained her.

"Thank you, my dear boy; and is Helen willing to live here with me? She is weeping; — is it for joy or grief?"

"For joy! — only for joy; for our Lelia is very glad to have such a sweet, sweet home as this."

"Lelia! Lelia! O, gracious Father! But you made a mistake, Henri, for Lelia is in heaven."

I could restrain her no longer. She sprang from my arms, and folded her mother to her heart, exclaiming,

"Mother! my own mother! Your child! Your own child! — Your own lost Lelia!"

Mrs. Stewart clasped her arms around her child, and held her tightly for a moment, and then her hands dropped, her face grew white as death, and she would have fallen, if I had not caught her in my arms; for Helen was too much weakened by the feelings and emotions which shook her frame like a reed.

In a brief period, by the application of proper remedies, she was restored to consciousness. Helen was bending over her when she opened her eyes. As weak as she

was, she flung her arms around her neck, and kissed her passionately, exclaiming,

"You are my Lelia! I know you are! But, how can it be? But those eyes! hair! expression! God be praised! O, my child! what a world of happiness you bring to this long desolate heart! Henri, my son, come and tell me all,— tell me how you learned that Helen Means was my own dear child!"

I gladly complied with her request; and when I had finished the strange narrative, she said, "It must be so! The lost is found! The dead is alive again! God bless you, my dear children! What moments, hours, days and years of suffering, have I endured! But this hour repays it all. With my own dear ones shall I pass triumphantly and hopefully to my grave!"

"You may expect to see many happy years ere that sad hour shall come," I remarked.

"Blessed years, with your children to comfort you, my mother," said Helen.

"Ah! yes, most blessed. I have ever loved you both, but I knew not how near and dear you would one day become. But this is too much joy for me. I would share it with all the world, and then my heart would be full. Send for all of our friends, and let us rejoice together."

In accordance with her suggestion, we sent invitations to all of our relatives and friends. They came,—

our brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, friends and neighbors. After we had partaken of a sumptuous dinner, I gave them the strange narrative. When I had concluded, surprise and wonder were depicted upon every countenance. Expressions like these were heard: "Wonderful!" "A miracle!" "Stranger than fiction!" "If the proof were not so positive, I could not believe it!" Then followed showers of congratulations, and a spirit of subdued joy beamed from every face. We were all happy, and the faint light in the east showed that another day was about to dawn upon the world ere our guests had retired or departed for their homes.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WEBBER FAMILY.

A DECIDED sensation was produced in our little country town when it became known that my beautiful and accomplished bride was the daughter of Mrs. Stewart, and that she was the little pale-faced, ragged child, who once lived with Deacon Webber. These two facts would have furnished abundant material for conversation; but, adding to them the other facts, it seemed so much like a highly-wrought romance, that the story was in everybody's mouth. The day after our happy gathering of friends, Mr. Edgarton went to visit the Webbers. When he returned, he came in to inform us of the result. It was just after dinner. His face was very red, and there was a roguish twinkle in his little round eyes.

"I have been to see them," said Mr. Edgarton.

"Been to see who?" I inquired.

"The pious ones, to be sure," he replied, laughing.

Uncle Eaton joined in the laugh, and said,

"You old rogue you!—I know where you have been."

"Ha, ha, ha! O, what a face he did make up!"

"Why, who do you mean, Mr. Edgarton?" asked Mrs. Stewart.

"The deacon, to be sure,— who else could it be? I went right away, after breakfast, to tell him the news."

"What! — Deacon Webber?"

"Yes, Deacon Webber, and the rest of 'em too."

"Just to vex and irritate them, I suppose," remarked Lelia. "That is not exactly right, Mr. Edgarton."

"Yes 't is, too; I wanted to see the old gentleman grin,— and I did."

"Rejoice not over an enemy," said Mrs. Stewart.

"He deserves it, and more too. If he don't get some of his punishment in this world, he will have more than he can manage in the next."

"If he gets all he deserves," said I.

"He who lives a false life, false to his God and false to his race, suffers every day; his whole life is a hell," said my uncle.

"Right again," said Mr. Edgarton. "I hope the deacon won't find any worse hell than he has already made for himself."

"A benevolent wish," said Uncle Eaton, "and we can all unite in it. But let us have your story."

"I went, in the first place," said Mr. Edgarton, "to see Hezekiah Webber. I found him mending his old boots. He sat on his bench, smoking, an exact picture of his father twenty years ago. Such a looking house

you never laid your eyes on, and such a looking woman and children. The condition of the house was utterly indescribable,— dirt and confusion."

"She is good-natured, of course," remarked my uncle.

"A regular termagant! I pity the children. And Hezekiah has his match. I told the news, and left them spitting fire at each other."

"How was that?" said I.

"When I told Hezekiah that your wife was the little girl that used to live with his father, and that she was the daughter of Mrs. Stewart, his wife said that she had heard of that little girl, and how they all abused her; and it was just like the Webbers, for they treated everybody like savages. Hezekiah was mad in a minute, and when I left them they were calling each other all sorts of appropriate names."

"You had better not have gone," said Mrs. Stewart.

"They are used to it,— so it won't hurt them any. After I left this interesting couple, I went to pay Job a visit; who, you know, was married a few weeks since. I there found she that was Hannah Webber. I suppose you have not heard the news about her? Her husband, who was a decent sort of a man when he married her, took himself off very suddenly a few days since, and about the same time Rose Webber was off too."

"Worse, and worse," I remarked.

"Just so. Job is the most decent one of the lot, and I suppose he may thank you for that."

"How so?" I asked.

"Why, didn't you beat it into him? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I believe I left my mark on him."

"So you did, so you did! O, you are a smart one, only get you fairly started! Well, Job is none too good, but he'll do. He went out of town, and was gone a year or two, and it improved him amazingly; and the wife he brought back with him is quite a woman."

"Then you should not have gone there," said Lelia.

"But I wanted to see her; and what 's the good of being partial? I told them the story, and Hannah looked anything but comfortable; and when I had finished she said, 'I hope he will get enough of her, for she was a little, ugly, dirty thing.'

"To my great surprise, Job said it was false, and that when she lived with his father they all abused her, from the oldest to the youngest, excepting his mother.

"'I am glad to hear you confess the truth,' said his wife.

"At this, Hannah caught her bonnet, and, calling them both fools, bolted out of the house, and went straight to see her darling brother Hezekiah.

"After she had gone, Job and his wife asked me many questions about you, which I answered as well as I could. We spoke of the knocking down scrape, and

he said he did not blame you at all. I then called on the deacon. I went in rather suddenly, and I found him bending over a pile of gold. I suppose he had been counting it. He said he wished people would rap when they came in."

"How did he look?" inquired my uncle.

"Worse than a beast! His face and hands were black with dirt and filth. His face and head have not cultivated the acquaintance of a razor or comb for a long time, I 'll warrant you."

"Was he decently clothed?" asked Mrs. Stewart.

"About as well as he used to clothe your daughter, — not a whit better. But the room in which he stays is worse than all the rest. I was glad to get out, and breathe the fresh air again."

"You did your errand first, did you not?" said my uncle.

"Certainly, certainly! I said, 'Deacon, I have got some news.'

"'What do I care?' he growled.

"'You may care a good deal, after you know what it is.'

"'After I hear it, I can tell better; so out with it, and don't keep me waiting, old soap-tub! for my time is precious.'"

When Mr. Edgarton told this, he burst into a loud laugh, in which we all joined.

"A pretty good joke," said my uncle.

"Very good, very good! The deacon would like to boil me up and make me into soap, I don't doubt. I should not wonder if he had formed a pretty correct estimate of what the soap would bring!"

I suggested to Mr. Edgarton that he would make a large quantity.

"So I should," he said. "Ha, ha! a very large quantity! But to return to my visit. 'You remember Henri Eaton, deacon?' I remarked.

"He looked up fiercely and said,

"'The villain! — what of him?'

"'He is married, deacon.'

"'What's that to me?'

"'Nothing in particular,— only he has married that little girl he enticed away from you; and she is very rich, too!'

"'Gods!' he said, 'I wish I had them in my power. I'd make them feel my wrath!'

"I continued. 'She is the daughter of Mrs. Stewart, and a gentleman has left them thousands!'

"'How much?' he inquired, eagerly.

"'*Thousands upon thousands!*' I replied.

"'I'll have it, if there is any law and justice in the land!' he said, grinding his teeth, and looking wild and fierce. 'She ran away from me, and he helped her — it was a great loss. I lost eight years labor, and I'll

have the worth in gold, in bright yellow gold, and the interest.'

"'The property was willed to her, you know.'

"'I don't care if it was,—I will have it! It would have been all mine, if it had not been for that bloody villain, that robber. O, I should like to tear out his eyes! I'll break the will, for she is not the daughter of Mrs. Stewart. I can prove that she is Means' child.'

"I then went on to tell him the whole story, when he growled and raved still more. He ordered me out of the house; and, not wishing to stay any longer, I came away."

"He is a beautiful character," I remarked.

"Beautiful! so is old clump-foot beautiful. Well, well; the devil will have the picking of his bones, one of these days,— that 's some comfort."

"Why, Mr. Edgarton!" said my aunt.

"He is a horrid creatur', Mrs. Eaton, and that 's the truth. I should like to give him one walloping for his abuse of Lelia."

"Leave him in the hands of his Maker," said Mrs. Stewart. "'Shall not the Lord of all the earth do right?'"

The next morning news came that Deacon Webber was crazy. In company with my uncle and Mr. Edgarton, I went to see him. He had become so raving in the night that it was necessary to chain him. After being

chained, he tore every rag of clothing from his body. I have never seen such a hideous, frightful object, as he was on that morning.

"It is mine, all, all mine," he said; "and I'll have it! Ha! ha! ha! ha! the white silver and the yellow gold is all mine. They thought to rob me of it, did they? They can't do it. I'll have it, I'll have it! Will they keep it all? No, no! by the gods. Justice! justice! See! there's a robber after my gold,— my yellow gold. Back! back with ye, you bloody villain! Let me get hold of him! I'll break his bones, tear his heart out, and let the swine feast upon his flesh! Let me go! let me go, I say! they are robbing me! O God! O God! There! there they are, stealing all my treasures. Stand back! away! I — I — know you now. The demons — the black demons — hold me fast! Don't, don't take it all! I am a poor old man. I sold my soul for my gold; — it's all I have. You will not take it all, good people? Leave the old man a little! I pray you, — I beg! I shall starve, if you take it! Could I but break these chains, I'd tear ye! Beware, ye bloody fiends! O! what is burning at my heart? Hell is in my bosom! O, my head! my head! Don't you see the devils? Look! see their red jaws, long teeth, and flaming tongues! How they hiss! Down with ye, damned spirits! down to hell! Where is my gold? I know; I hid it all last night. Ha! ha!

Search, search for it, ye villains! but you can't find it, — you never can find it. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

"I'll have him yet. He cannot escape me now. He shall not always baulk me. Let him look to it,— look to it,— or I'll tear out his dastard heart! I'll bite out his eyes! Don't take it,— the poor old man will starve. I shall die! Laugh, ye horrid monsters! Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

In this strain he continued, with scarcely any intermission; and before many days had passed away he was a corpse. His property amounted to thirty thousand dollars, and he had willed it, with the exception of two hundred dollars, to Hezekiah and Hannah. After his death, Mr. Edgarton felt some remorse, lest what he said to him had been the cause of it. But I told him that most likely the result would have been the same when the story reached him, and I did not doubt but that he was more than half crazy before. These suggestions were abundantly satisfactory to him, and he was as ready to laugh and joke as ever.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MY FATHER'S DIARY.

THE reader will remember that my mother, on her death-bed, requested me to read my father's diary. My mind had been so much occupied with other subjects that I had hitherto neglected to do so. I took it out of the drawer while Uncle and Aunt Eaton were visiting us, and, after reading it to myself, at their request read the most of it to them. Some brief extracts may not prove uninteresting to the reader:

"It has ever been my boast that I was heart-whole, "but I can utter that boast no more. I was fated, to-"day, to behold a being of such entrancing beauty that "my heart surrendered at once. One glance from those "killing black eyes, and it was all over with me; for I "felt as helpless as a captive bird. 'Well, Mr. Eaton, "what's to be done now?' A pertinent question, and "Mr. Eaton must answer it. I do not know who she is. "I do not even know her name, but I will learn it, I "make no doubt; and, what's more, I'll learn her heart "too, and win it to myself, to be all my own, if so be "the gods but aid me."

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"I am happy and sad to-night; happy because I have "seen the beautiful angel again, and sad lest I should "fail to win her. But it must not be so. I'll study "the lexicon of my heart, and, if I find any such word "there as *fail*, I will expunge it before I sleep. Mary "Flanders, that 's her name, and it is a good name too; "but how would it look changed to Mary Eaton? I "like the latter best. I always did think that Mary was "the sweetest name in the universe, and now it is ten "thousand times sweeter than ever. A friend asked me, "to-day, if I thought her handsome. Handsome! she "is more than that, for she is perfectly beautiful. Every "feature of her face is charming, and her eyes are soul-"full of thought, eloquent, and big with hope, light and "joy. But her form is enravishing,—full, round, almost "voluptuous; but I would not have it other than it is, "for it is perfect."

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"O, this suspense is killing, and I cannot endure it! "I must see Mary; — see her, ay, I must know her "well. Who is coming to disturb my rêvery now, I "wonder? The intruder is not welcome. A letter,— "no, a note; — an invitation to an evening party at "Mr. ——'s. I will go, and may I be so fortunate as to "meet her who is so dear to this unquiet heart!"

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"It is nearly morning, and here I am, once more, in "my own little room; but I have no wish to sleep, no "inclination,—so I will write. This has been a charming "night, and the moon has swam in the blue ocean above "for many pleasant hours. Her light has departed now, "for yonder black cloud, rolling up in the west with "such dark grandeur, caught her in its huge arms and "smothered her out of sight. And Mary was at the "party; all that I prayed for has been granted. We "know each other now. I have touched her hand, and, "O, rapture! I have pressed my lips to her downy "cheeks and ripe lips, and she has pressed her lips to "mine! Thanks, thanks for the party, or this could not "have been. I kissed others,—did I? Bah! but I "could not help it. I would have kissed a whole army "of women, rather than lost those sweet kisses of "Mary."

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"O, cruel disappointment! thou tellest me I am but "mortal. With a friend I called on Mr. Flanders to-"day, but I did not see Mary; she, alas! was far away, "fifty miles from home, at school. Delays are danger-"ous, I do believe, for I should have gone before. "What shall I do now?"

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"The skies look brighter to-night, for I have had an "encouraging word from Mary's father. I called, and

"was shown into his study; and, after discussing politics, "the weather, and various other things, in which I fell "into most ludicrous mistakes, I made bold to speak of "Mary. He seemed deeply interested, and talked in "such a way as to encourage me to tell him what my "sentiments were. He said that he conceived it an "honor, and hoped I might win his daughter's heart "and hand, for I had his sanction and best wishes. "'You met at Mr. ——'s party. She spoke of you so "often afterwards, that we all told her she was in "love with you; and I doubt not she was well pleased "with your appearance.' Mr. Flanders invited me to "call again soon. I shall go."

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"I have once more seen the father of my darling "Mary; for I feel that she is mine now, or nearly so. "Mr. Flanders says that Mary loves me, but he wishes "the matter should be left where it is, until she returns "from school; for, if I should write or visit her, "he is fearful that her schooling will do her but "little good. She would be thinking of me, and not "of her books. Bless her, I hope she *will* think of "me! O, how enrapturing, to engage all the thoughts "of such a glorious being! I have promised to comply "with the wishes of Mr. Flanders. But, in the mean "time, what shall I do? I cannot stay here, for this "ennui is awful,— so I am off."

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"It was late last night when I returned from my "journey, and so I could not see the one whom I dearly "love. I had but just laid my head upon my pillow, when "the wind began to blow — not loud and clear, like that "of the West, which goes on its way with such a grand "sweep, making all the proud old trees do it reverence "as it passes by; but it had an unpleasant moan, and "sometimes it sobbed as if it had known the bitterness of "great grief. The sounds went to my heart, and caused "it to feel strangely sad; as though some calamity "was about to draw near, and touch my hopes with the "poison of its lips. Is it superstition, or has the wind a "spirit which warns us of approaching griefs and disap-"pointments? I know not, but I feel disappointment "to-night. I went this afternoon, with a light heart, "to visit her who will one day be all my own. To my "surprise, I learned that she had been at home some "months. But how she has changed since I saw her! "What can be the cause of it? She is pale and listless, "and her face has lost the sprightly, joyous expression. "I fear she has studied too much. Overtax the brain, "and the roses will leave the cheek, and the brightest "eye grow dull. But she seemed not pleased to see me. "Has her nature lost all its glad enthusiasm,— its "up-springing, buoyant life? I hope not!"

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"We are to marry,—and yet I am not happy. There "must be trouble somewhere, and I wish I could learn "where and what it is. The sky is cloudy, and the "grief-rain is falling; and will the bow of promise "come out? I love her — love her dearly; but, does "she love me? Shall the golden light of mutual joy "ever gladden our way? There is a bright star looking "down sweetly at me; — is it an omen of good? Alas! "the clouds have shut it from my sight, and again the "wind sobs as it did on the first night of my return. "O, my God! grant me but this, that when Mary is all "my own, she shall smile again as of yore!"

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"Mary is a wife now — my wife,— but we are not "happy; and my heart, instead of brimming with joy "to-night, is aching with hopes once so fresh and glad, "but now withering for the grave. Only one week, 'one "little' week, since we married; and yet, O, horror! I "almost regret that she is mine. Two or three languid, "miserable smiles, is all the sunshine I have known "since I led her, with loving hands and a faithful "heart, to the altar. She is irritable and unhappy, "and I —— Travel and excitement may produce a "change, and bring back the color to her cheeks, and a "smile to her eyes. O, I would give worlds to see her "once more as she was on that heavenly night when I "first pressed my lips to her beautiful cheek!

"Bright summer glories are all around me, and the "day is clear, balmy and serene. There was a time "when I should have been happy, most happy, on a day "like this. But O, I am not happy now, and I may "never be again; for the bright angel of hope comes not "now to make her home in my heart! I could not "have believed, upon my wedding-day, that in two "short months — short, have I said? — I should be the "poor wretch that I am. Mary is not only unhappy "herself, but she is very unkind; and sometimes she "says things to me that I would bear from no other "living being. I have done all that I could to gratify "her. We have visited many interesting places. We "have stood by the sea-side, and viewed the blue expanse "of waters, and heard the great hymn of the waves, and "saw them dash upon the shore as though they would "break through the battlements of God! We have seen "the mountains, whose snowy summits were capped with "clouds; and we have stood upon their highest peaks, "and heard the wind rush down their sides, the thunders "rumble and roar, while the lightning leaped from the "dark threatening masses above and around us, and "covered the mountains with red sheets of flame. We "have seen Niagara, the wonder of the world; her wild, "madly-dashing waters, her billows of foam, her clouds "of mist and spray, and her rainbows, which seemed like "water-spirits dropped down from the clouds. We heard

"the mighty cataract, and almost fancied we saw the "lightnings, when the falling waters flashed in the sun-"light. But, merciful God! all has been in vain. "I have entreated Mary to tell me why she is not happy; "but she will not open her lips."

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"Cold winter is rapidly approaching. Alas! the win-"ter of the heart has already come, cruelly blighting "fresh-budding hopes, cutting down all the flowers of "life, filling the air with frost and snow, and desolating "the world! Life has become a burden, for all the "leaping fountains of pleasure are fettered with the "chains of cold and frost. Happiness has been stabbed "at the heart, and she lays low in the dust, bleeding, "dying; and the freezing winds are howling around her, "shrieking her requiem."

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"What a dream of bliss was mine! O, God! that I 'was doomed to awake to such horrors. Peace, poor "heart and murmur not, but hope yet. Yea, I will hope. "There must be a change for the better. Mary will yet "love me. When a mother's hopes and joys are hers, "her heart must soften."

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"What would be winter with no expectation of gentle "spring? Should we not despair? Such is my lot, "for Mary dearly loves her bright-eyed boy, but

"there is little love for me. He is a beautiful child,
"and I have given him the name of my only brother.
"May his heart be as noble and good!"

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"Many years have rolled away, and journeyed far into
"the past, since my wedding-day,—a day so big with
"hope. I remember, as though it had been but yester-
"day. It was when the hills and valleys were spread
"over with the freshness and beauty of spring, and my
"heart was light and joyous, almost perfect in its happi-
"ness. A few sunny smiles would have made it so. I
"then thought I had but just commenced life. Every
"eye seemed to rest upon my lovely bride in admiration.
"Alas! she had no beauty of the heart. We have now
"four children; and the last, a beautiful boy, I have
"named for myself. This does not please his mother.
"She wanted his name Herbert, but I would have one
"child who should bear my own name. Herbert is a
"name which will do well enough; but I see no reason
"why she should have insisted upon his having the name.
"If she had a friend or relative by the name of Herbert,
"I should not think so strange of it."

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"What a marvellous thing is this life of ours! Who
"can solve its mysteries? Why is it that so many should
"groan in poverty, doomed to unremitting toil for a
"pittance so small that it barely keeps soul and body

"from parting company? Why is it that a portion of "mankind should live in idle extravagance and waste? "Why are we doomed to misfortune, sickness, and the "thousand ills that flesh is heir to? Such thoughts will "come crowding upon me at times; and then I should "fall under the weight of my sorrows, if my faith in an "over-ruling Power was not strong and unwavering. "He who permitted evil and suffering to enter the world "will ultimately over-rule them all for good. Let me "believe this, and my heart shall still find rest. That I "must continue to suffer, I well know; but it would seem "that I should be happy. I have an abundance of what "are called the good things of this world, and a wife and "four beautiful children. Why should I not be happy? "There is but one thing lacking. I was made to love "and to be loved. If Mary loved me truly, and was "ever kind to me and faithful to her children, fulness "of joy would be mine. I had anticipated so much "happiness in the married state, that the cruel disap-"pointment is grievous to be borne. O, God! give "me patience, to bear without a murmur my heavy "burden of grief."

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"I regret that our ideas of governing children are so "different. I would never strike them a blow. Such "punishment is degrading, and should be banished from "the world. Henri is not a favorite with his mother,

"and, on that account, I fear he receives more whip-
"pings than he otherwise would."

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"'Trouble, trouble,
"Fire burn and cauldron bubble.'

"I do not like to quarrel and wrangle; and yet I can-
"not always avoid it. My wife has just been whipping
"Henri, very severely, for a most trivial offence. I
"demanded the cause of such harsh treatment, and she
"told me to attend to my own business, and she would
"take care of hers. She intended to be mistress in the
"house, and she had no objection to my being master out
"of it.

"'It will do no good to whip a child so young,' I said.

"'He is my child,' she replied, 'as much as yours;
"and I will whip him when I think he deserves it!'

"'But you are too severe, and you will ruin him for-
"ever, and drive all the love from his heart.'

"'He shall mind me, or I will whip him till the blood
"runs!'

"These words, and the manner in which she uttered
"them, made me angry, and I said, 'By ——, you
"shan't!'

"'So help me God, I will!' she replied.

"'You abuse him, Mary, and you know you do. If

"you corrected him as a parent should, I would be the "last one to interfere.'

"'He is the most irritating and the worst-tempered "boy I ever saw; and, when I think that a whipping "will do him good, he will be pretty sure to get it, in "spite of your prohibition.'

"'Be careful, Mary, or you may go beyond the "bounds of endurance. You know, as well as I do, that "Henri is a noble boy, for one so young. If he has a "quick, passionate temper, such treatment as he receives "at your hands will only make it worse and worse every "day. How can you be so cruel to your own child?'

"'I am all to blame for his bad temper, of course. "He has your disposition, and that is enough to wear "any one to the grave. I wonder that I have lived so "long!'

"'So do I, Mary. We live a most miserable life,— "and who is the cause of it?'

"'Of course, I am the whole cause of it! That is the "way with you men,— the women are all to blame.'

"'Ask your own heart.'

"'I shall not trouble myself.'

"'O, Mary!'

"'If you are about to faint, I 'll run for the camphor.'

"Such scenes are not unfrequent in our home; and so "peace and happiness have sought in vain to take up "their abode with us. God knows that I hate these matri-

"monial conflicts. I witnessed some before I was mar-
"ried; but I little dreamed that I should ever be doomed
"to take part in them. Henri is a smart, high-spirited
"boy; and, as his mother does not manifest so much love
"and forbearance for him as for the other children, he is
"the cause of the most of our bickerings. I did not wish
"to have more affection for one child than for another;
"but I know well enough that I love Henri best. As
"his mother does not treat him so well as she should, his
"brothers and sisters seem to think they have the same
"privilege; and the evil has doubly increased since the
"birth of George. I fear that Henri's disposition will
"be entirely spoiled. If he is not used well, he is ever
"ready to fight, whether his opponent is great or small.
"I tremble to think what he may be led to do, in a
"moment of passion, should he live to be a man!

"Mary is one of the strangest women I ever met with.
"She has manifested but little affection for me, since she
"became my wife. A few times she has seemed to
"relent,— the love-star would glimmer for a moment,
"and then go out in three-fold darkness. When she has
"given me but a single ray of love, I have felt that,
"would it but continue to shine on, I could forget and
"forgive all. Why did she marry me, if she had no love
"in her heart? I imagine, sometimes, that there is a
"hidden cause for this strange conduct; but what it is
"I have sought in vain to learn. I have watched her

"when she seemed in deep and painful thought; for "she sat in an abstracted mood, and the tears rolled "down her cheeks, which still retain much of the beauty "they possessed when she first won my love. I fancy, "at times, that she is deranged. Would to God I could "believe it! But no,— or if it 'be madness, yet there 's "method in it.'

"Well, well! repining will do no good; so I will try "to suffer on, without murmuring. My life is not in "vain; for I sometimes visit the suffering, and feed the "hungry, and clothe the naked. I have done it to-day. "A poor drunkard's family was in the greatest distress, "and it did my heart good to relieve it. How thankful "they were! It is a luxury to do good. 'More blessed "to give than to receive.'

"Heaven has sent us another child, and his name is "Herbert. I wished to call him William, after an old "friend; but I had my way once before, and so his "mother has her way now. But why is she so tenacious "about it? I suppose I shall learn the reason when I "learn a great many other things more mysterious than "this."

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"Trouble and grief have at last done their work, and "now I must die. Consumption has poisoned the very "fountain of life, and there is no hope. It has already "deceived me too often. Health and strength will never

"come again. Such is life, and I am reconciled. My "wife is a little more kind, but she loves me not; but may "God pardon her as freely as I do! I must leave seven "children, with no one to guide them aright. I am "wrong; Mrs. Stewart has promised to be a mother to "them,—bear and forbear,—and she will be faithful to "her word. She has done much for my children now; "and her influence with Henri is great, and he dearly "loves her. I would that there was more union among "the children, but wishes are vain. I have never seen a "stronger love between brothers than there is between "Henri and Herbert. This fact seems to vex their "mother not a little, which is another mystery."

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"I must leave them all in the hands of God, trusting "that all things shall come out well at last. My wife "has made me one solemn promise, for which I thank "her. Mrs. Stewart is to continue to reside in the fam-"ily until the children shall become men and women. "It is hard to leave them; but the great King demands "that another victim shall be offered on his dark altar, "and I am ready. I shall depart in peace, trusting in "the mercy of God, and in the redeeming grace of Jesus "Christ. When I shall have entered the spirit-land, may "God grant, even though it bring weary toil and suffer-"ing, that I may be allowed to watch over and guard my "children!"

These extracts, which I have made from the large number of pages of which the journal is composed, are sufficient to show to the reader how unhappy was my father's wedded life. They show, too, that he had a good heart, and that he bore his wrongs with a commendable degree of patience.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

WHEN our good uncle and aunt had returned to their home, Mrs. Stewart, Lelia and myself, were left in quiet possession of the dear and pleasant old homestead. I need not to inform the reader that life was now peaceful and joyous; for how could it be otherwise? One day, when Lelia had run in to see Mr. Edgarton a few minutes, I noticed that Mrs. Stewart's face wore a very thoughtful expression.

"You seem to be in a revery," I remarked.

"I was thinking of old scenes," she replied.

"I hope your thoughts were pleasant."

"Yes, dear, more so than they were wont to be in days gone by."

"I am glad of that, dear mother," I said, kneeling down before her, and taking her hands in mine, looking up to her face with my heart brim-full of love and filial devotion.

"God bless you, my dear boy!" she replied, bending down and kissing my cheek, while tears of joy glistened in her eyes.

"He has blessed me, beyond my deserts, in giving me such a sweet wife and good mother. You are happy, now, I trust."

"God knows I am, Henri, very, very happy," she said, while the tears fell rapidly from her eyes. "I did not expect that such blessings would be mine in my old age. I thought Lelia was in her grave, and that she could not come to me, but I must go to her. Little did I think, when I took in the poor, pale-faced boy, and gave him a good warm supper, that it was my own child! How glad I am that I always treated children well! If I had not, it might have been my punishment to have abused and slighted my own lost one."

"Your heart was always too merciful to allow you to abuse anything."

"I can almost return the compliment."

"Not quite."

"But you have a good heart, Henri; and you have done so much for me!"

"Not so much as you have for me."

"I believe you mistaken there, but we will not quarrel,—I am glad that the obligations are mutual. I have cause to be thankful for one thing, which I could not reasonably have anticipated, had I known that Lelia was living."

"What is that?"

"She is as innocent and as pure, and more self-

sacrificing, than she could have been, had she always remained with me."

"She has passed through the fire, and come out unscathed."

"There are but few natures that could endure so much, and remain pure, innocent, and most loving of heart!"

Here there was a pause, while I continued to hold her hands, and gaze into her face. After sitting in silence for a few minutes, she said,

"There is one thing, Henri, which would gratify me very much."

"What is it?" I inquired.

"To visit, once more, my old home!"

"Do you mean Uncle Eaton's?"

"No, Henri! The home which was mine before my husband was taken from me, and where I lived when I lost my Lelia!"

"Your wish shall be granted, mother; and we will go to-morrow, if the day is pleasant."

"You must not tell Lelia of our intentions; for she thinks she should know the house, and the scenery around it."

"I will not; for I am as anxious to see what the result will be as you are."

Here Lelia came in; and, seeing my position, she knelt down by my side, looking into the face of each

with worlds of affection gushing from her sweet blue eyes. It was a happy trio, and the purest joy was brimming in all our hearts.

The next morning the sun rose clear and golden, making the world glad in its great light. At eight o'clock we commenced our short journey. We had but nine miles to go, and the ride was pleasant; for the road was good, and the scenery varied and pleasing. Mrs. Stewart informed me, by a sign, when we passed the house where Austin, the murderer, had lived. Just beyond we came to some woods; and then Lelia suddenly started, and turned very pale. I inquired the cause of her emotion. She said that strange and indistinct thoughts came crowding upon her, as soon as she came in sight of the grove.

"It must have been there," she said, "where the monster attempted to take my life! It makes my blood run cold to think of it!"

We had gone but a little further, when she clapped her hands with delight.

"O, there is my home,—I know it is! There is 'the cot where I was born!' Isn't it, mother?" pointing to a little cottage.

"Are you sure that is the place?" I inquired.

"O, yes, I know it is! and there is a brook on beyond it!"

"I don't see it," I replied.

"You will when you get to the cottage!"

Sure enough, when I stopped the horse in front of the house, a bright little stream met my eyes just beyond. Mrs. Stewart seemed greatly affected.

"This was our home, was it not, dear mother?" said Lelia.

"Yes, my child!" she answered, almost overcome by old remembrances, which came thronging upon her. Just then we noticed a number of faces at the window. Lelia saw them, and, after looking earnestly, inquired who they were.

"I never saw either of them before," said her mother. "Have you, Henri?"

"I should think not," I replied.

"Where can I have seen them?" said Lelia.

"Did you ever see them before?" I inquired.

"Not all of them. Where could it be?"

In the mean time, the people in the house, seeing that we were not disposed to go any further, came and opened the door. I briefly informed them that the two ladies I had with me were mother and daughter, and that they lived in the cottage many years ago, and had now come to see it once more. The one who appeared to be the mother now came to the door, and invited us in. The mother and three daughters were binding shoes. Lelia kept moving her eyes from one to another of the inmates, as if she was puzzled to make out who they were.

"What is it?" I asked, in a whisper.

"I don't know," she said. "It is so strange!"

"What is so strange?"

"I have seen them before,—I *know* I have!"

I turned to the mother, and inquired how long she had lived in the cottage.

"Some eight or ten years," she replied.

"Where did you live before?"

She regarded me a moment as though she thought I was possessed of a large share of inquisitiveness, and then answered, "In Boston, sir."

Lelia now looked up, as if a new light had broken in upon her.

"Your name?" she said.

"Means," was the reply.

I made a signal to Lelia to be silent.

"Did a gentleman ever bring a little girl to your house, to get her boarded?" I inquired.

"Yes," replied the woman, looking somewhat guilty.

"Did he pay you for her board?"

"Yes, sir."

"For how long?"

"He sent money every year, for a number of years."

"Did you not send her away to live with some one?"

"Yes, sir."

"With whom?"

"Deacon Webber, of ——."

"Why did you do that, when her board was paid?"

"O, sir, I pray your mercy! It was not my fault; indeed, it was not!"

"Whose was it, then?"

"My husband's."

"Where is he?"

"In his grave. He spent the money for drink, and he died seven years ago."

"What did you call the name of the child?"

"Helen Means."

"Did the deacon know that she was not your child?"

"No."

"Why did you not tell him?"

"Mr. Means threatened to kill me, if I told any one. After he got so much money, he abused me most shamefully; he was drunk half of his time, both day and night. I stood in fear of my life."

"I trust you are telling the truth!"

"It is the truth, sir, the solemn truth! — and I hope you will believe me."

"You appear honest, and I doubt not you are. Have you heard from the little girl since she went to live with Deacon Webber?"

"Only once, and then he sent us word that she ran away. I have had many unhappy hours thinking of that poor child!"

"Have you anything now that belonged to the child when she was first brought to your house?"

"Yes, a little locket that she wore around her neck, containing some hair."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Stewart; "it was all I had!"

"Why did you take it from her neck?" I asked.

"For fear my husband should sell it for rum."

"We would see the locket."

She went into another room, and soon returned, placing a gold locket in my hand.

"Is this the one?" I asked, holding it up.

"Yes, yes!" said Mrs. Stewart, taking it, and kissing it again and again.

Mrs. Means and her daughters looked on in surprise. Here I arose, and, taking Lelia by the hand, said,

"Mrs. Means, this is my wife; and her name was once Helen Means!"

"What! the little girl who lived with us?"

"The very same. And this," said I, pointing to Mrs. Stewart, "is her mother."

Each member of the family regarded Lelia as though greatly astonished. She went and kissed them all, and seemed well pleased to see them again. Mrs. Means informed us that they left Boston about the time they learned that Helen had run away, and that her husband

died soon after. They had lived ever since in the cottage, she and her girls binding shoes, and the boys working for the neighboring farmers. She had six children; two boys, and four girls. Having asked and answered all the questions that were desirable on both sides, and visited the little creek, and other places of interest, we turned our faces homeward.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

THAT evening, as we sat at the fireside in our happy home, talking in relation to the result of our visit, which we all regarded as somewhat remarkable, we suddenly relapsed into silence. I was the first to speak.

"I think of buying the cottage," I said, "and making a present of it to Mrs. Means."

"I was thinking of that," said Mrs. Stewart.

"So was I," said Lelia. "I hope you will, Henri! Mrs. Means was always kind to me."

"How would a few acres of land go with it?"

"My own dear husband, it is just like you! How happy it will make them!"

"She has had a hard time, all her life, I should think. But there is much of the woman about her yet. How tidy the house looked!"

"I noticed that," said Mrs. Stewart. "Let the cottage be purchased immediately, and that will save them rent through the cold winter, which is near at hand."

"And the land," said Lelia, "will make labor for the

boys next summer, and what they raise enable the family to get a living, without such severe toil."

"I like the plan," I replied; "and, as we can spare a few hundred dollars just as well as not, the thing shall be done forthwith."

Not long after this, I bought the cottage and ten acres of good land, and made a present of them to Mrs. Means. It relieved her heart of a world of care and anxiety, and she felt no longer obliged to toil fifteen hours per day. The gratitude of the family can be better imagined than described. It is pleasant to do good; and, could this truth be realized, good works and charities would smile upon us everywhere, as sweetly as the sunlight of God.

A number of years have passed away since these scenes occurred, and happy years have they been to us. Filial, conjugal and parental love, this holy trinity in unity, have ever filled our hearts with purest joy, and, with their clear, shining light, made glad and beautiful our home, brightening, like a ray from heaven, all the pathway of life. Our number has increased, for we have two children, a girl and boy; and we think they are the sweetest children in the world. When our little girl was born, I claimed the right to give her a name; and so I called her Helen Means. Lelia named the boy, who is two years younger than Helen, and his name is Henri.

Mrs. Stewart, our good mother, is attaining unto a blessed old age, and she is one of the best and happiest

old ladies I have ever met with. How dearly she loves little Helen and Henri! and they think there is nobody in the world quite equal to Grandmother Stewart. Uncle and Aunt Eaton are frequently with us; and then our fat neighbor, Mr. Edgarton, will come in, and they will talk over, for the fiftieth time, the life and adventures of Henri Eaton and Helen Means; and, in the evening, Mr. Edgarton and Mother Stewart amuse themselves with a game of backgammon; or, a few neighbors are invited in, and then Lelia, or some one else, will play the piano, and we have a social dance; and Mrs. Stewart will join in with us, as young and spry as the best of us.

Mr. Edgarton will always insist upon dancing in a cotillon, at least once in an evening, with Lelia; and when "grand right and left" is called for, he is sure to blunder in such a manner as to produce shouts of laughter. The old gentleman will shake his sides, and say it does him good and reminds him of old times.

I should have mentioned before that, on the marriage of Thomas and Lizzie, George went to live with Thomas, and Lizzie with Jane. They have since married, and I am happy to say that all my brothers and sisters are doing well.

Hezekiah Webber and wife have parted company. They quarrelled so much that he was glad to get rid of her by the sacrifice of five thousand dollars. He retains

all the children but the youngest. Since this occurred, Hezekiah has disposed of all his property in town, and, with his sister Hannah, has gone to parts unknown. Job is still here, and he and his wife are generally respected.

Hezekiah and Hannah were long since expelled from the church which they disgraced; and I am now satisfied that the deacon would not have remained in the church so long, if his true character had been known by a majority of its members. Let no one suppose that I intend his character as a fair sample of any denomination of Christians; for, although the Pharisee and hypocrite may be found with all, so also the good. There are Deacon Webbers in too many churches; but I trust there are more like Uncle and Aunt Eaton, and our dear Mother Stewart. Such good souls as the last three are to be found in the church and out of it, and their influence is ennobling upon all who come within its sphere. They make the world better and happier. They are true Christians, whether they belong to this sect or that, or no sect.

I complain not that wolves in sheep's clothing should be admitted into the church, but that they should so frequently be allowed to remain there, when they are known to be wolves. They are wealthy or influential, and therefore not to be disturbed. If they wrong a little

child, or traffic in the bodies and souls of men, the matter is passed over as though it were of but little consequence. When such things are allowed, the brother members partake of the guilt.

There is another grievous fault with many professors,—they unite with the strong against the weak; and it was this which so embittered my heart against the church to which the deacon belonged. I admit that they might have thought the deacon in the right and I in the wrong. But they should have investigated the matter, and so have escaped the guilt of wronging the weak, the innocent and the oppressed. If we allow ourselves to judge hastily and unadvisedly, we should not expect to judge righteous judgment, and so live to repent of the evil we have unintentionally been guilty of. The really good, in the church of which the deacon was a member, lived to see their error which they committed in justifying him, and acknowledged it with sorrow. But the hypocritical "had always known and said that the deacon was miserly, pharisaical and wicked;" when the truth was, they had not said one word in condemnation of his course, but justified it to the fullest extent, until he was caught robbing the very church of which he was deacon; then they were horror-struck, for he had committed the sin of sins! They had not learned enough of Christ to know that the wrong done to the little child was a thousand times more

offensive in the sight of God and all good and enlightened men. But, as the one who suffered the greatest wrong freely forgave all who participated in it (she who was once called Helen Means), so I, notwithstanding my former bitter hatred, as freely pardon. I have learned that it is better to love than to hate, to forgive rather than seek revenge.

I need not tell the reader that Lelia is one of the best of wives and mothers, a good neighbor, and a faithful friend. Her heart is ever brimming with love for both friends and foes, and the poor and destitute speak her praise in words and looks of love and gratitude. She is a blessed, good woman; and no other being could so have softened and changed my hasty and impetuous nature. When I look into the mirror of the past, I am surprised to see how many unlovely traits of character I once possessed, and I feel that I have reason to be thankful that I am now rid of them. Good fortune smiled upon me in my younger days, or I should have fared worse than I did; for, as my temper was hasty, violent, and not controlled by reason, I might have inflicted upon the victims of my anger lasting injury; and perchance, though I shudder to think of it, have taken the life of a fellow-creature. Now my passions are completely under the control of principle; and it was love, faithful and true, that did the work.

How mighty, how godlike, is love! Many waters cannot quench, nor floods drown it. Its mission is ennobling; for it softens, purifies and elevates the human heart, even as the sun in the heavens melts the snows and frosts of winter, breaking his chains of ice, awaking wide nature to renewed life, beauty and living joy!

HDI
HW 1